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Domhnall Gleeson on dedication, accents and Taylor Swift videos

Life & Arts

Francis Fukuyama on the return of history 'We're living in a weird time'

Life & Arts

Brexit and Thatcher to blame for UK's era of low growth, says PM

- Economy took a 6% hit from leaving the EU
- Former leader Starmer to stand down as MP

Pippa Crerar
Jessica Elgot

Andy Burnham has blamed Brexit and Margaret Thatcher for a decade of low growth in the UK, arguing that Britain needs to be brutally honest about having taken "a series of wrong turns" in the last 40 years.

In his first Commons appearance since he took over as prime minister about six weeks ago, Burnham told MPs he wanted to build a new sense of optimism so "we can make this next decade better than the last".

People wanted "much more substantial change" on the big issues facing the country, he said. "That is what I will bring. Britain is not where any of us would wish it to be. Things are not working as they should."

The UK economy has taken a 6% hit from the effects of Brexit, according to economists' analysis of internal Bank of England data on thousands of British companies since the referendum a decade ago.

Burnham's first commons appearance came as Keir Starmer, his predecessor, announced he would stand down as an MP, saying he wanted to focus on international affairs, triggering 10

▲ *Andy Burnham said he wanted to 'unlock a feeling of positivity and possibility' in first statement to MPs as prime minister* PHOTOGRAPH: HOUSE OF COMMONS/GETTY

Russia behind Leipzig drone attack – Germany

Kate Connolly
Berlin

The German government has blamed Russia for the drone attack on Leipzig airport last month, calling it "dangerous behaviour" and part of a systematic effort by Moscow to "cause great damage" through a large number of hybrid attacks.

The interior minister, Alexander Dobrindt, and the foreign minister, Johann Wadephul, ended weeks of speculation and the government's hesitancy over blaming Russia, saying in a brisk 10-minute briefing in Berlin that all indications were the Russian state had provided the know-how and equipment for the planned attack and "low-level agents" were recruited to carry it out.

A drone loaded with explosives was discovered at Leipzig/Halle airport on 4 August attached to the wing of a Ukrainian Antonov cargo plane used to transport weapons to Ukraine. It failed to detonate but could have caused a catastrophe, authorities said.

Russia will face a package of penalty measures, Wadephul said, adding that the German government saw "a need 2

This summer was UK's hottest, says Met Office

Pippa Neill
Environment reporter

This summer was the UK's hottest on record, according to provisional data, and the Met Office said the mean temperature was made 130 times more likely by the climate crisis.

Record-breaking and back-to-back heatwaves have scorched much of Europe. In England, temperatures peaked at 38.1C (100.6F) at Kew Gardens in London on 13 August, and the country had its hottest June since records began in 1884. Scientists said these heatwaves were possible only because 8

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'Cruel' NHS end-of-life care gaps failing ill children, critics say

▼ *Sarah Buchan Cooke said it made a huge difference to her whole family that her son Dylan was able to die at home in January 2023*

Denis Campbell
Health policy editor

Seriously ill children are being denied the chance to die at home because the NHS in many parts of England is flouting its legal duty to provide the care needed to make that happen, critics say.

The widespread failure to provide at-home end-of-life care is forcing children who want to die at home to instead do so in hospital. Campaigners have described it as "cruel".

The postcode lottery in palliative care means some of the almost 89,000 under-19s in England who have a life-limiting condition may not get their wish to die at home. Medical advances mean their numbers have almost trebled since 2003-04, and the complexities of their illnesses have increased. About 1,600 die each year.

Nick Carroll, the chief executive of the charity Together for Short Lives, said: "It is shocking that children with serious illnesses are waiting to leave hospital because the health and care system is not taking responsibility for their community care. To deny families the chance to spend precious moments together at home before their child dies is simply cruel."

He accused the NHS of neglect for not ensuring that all children who want to can die at home with specialist teams including doctors, nurses and therapists on hand during their final days.

The NHS's 42 integrated care boards (ICBs) are legally obliged under the Health and Care Act 2022 to ensure such care is provided around the clock at home when a child is dying. But 15 (36%) of them do not commission such services, freedom of information requests by Together for Short Lives show.

Only 13 (31%) were able to show they were doing so. Ten (24%) were providing some but not all of the care they should, and three (7%) said they were still organising such care.

The lack of provision means very sick children are ending up having to seek help at A&E or be admitted to hospital, some of whom then die there rather than at home.

Carroll said: "Our research shows that many families, simply because they live in a certain area, may be denied the chance to have their child die in the safety and comfort of their own home because ministers and the NHS have failed to put the right care in place. That should shame us all."

He blamed the situation on ICBs' precarious finances and on their "widespread assumption that palliative care is primarily for older adults, despite thousands of children across England living with life-shortening and life-threatening conditions".

He said while an early draft of the government's forthcoming "modern service framework" for palliative care specifically mentioned babies, children and young people, that reference was not included in the most recent version.

Sarah Buchan Cooke said it made a huge difference to the whole family when her son Dylan was able to die at home in January 2023, just before he turned four, after a long spell in hospital. He had Sandhoff disease, a rare neurodegenerative condition that left him needing 24/7 care.

Great Ormond Street children's hospital and Haven House, a children's hospice, both in London, supported the family in Dylan's final days. "At the end of his life it was a beautiful thing to have him at home. I can't really imagine it any other way. I'm very aware of how fortunate we were," Buchan Cooke said.

> ***'Many families may be denied the chance to have their child die at home because of [lack of right care]'***
>
> **Nick Carroll**
> *Together for Short Lives*

"It breaks my heart to think of other families in our situation not being able to have that same level of care and support. You're the one who knows your child best. That ability to choose [between home and hospital] means everything."

In March, Rachel de Souza, the children's commissioner for England, highlighted that some children, including with life-limiting illnesses, were spending months and sometimes years in hospital because of a lack of "safe or appropriate" alternatives elsewhere.

Delays in arranging packages of care, a shortage of children's social care placements and housing issues were "leaving children and their families in impossible situations", de Souza said.

Such children are disproportionately from poor backgrounds or ethnic minorities, data shows.

The NHS Alliance, which represents ICBs, did not respond directly to the findings.

It agreed with the charity that access to end-of-life care for children should be universal but emphasised that commissioning such services could be "complex".

Ian Perrin, the alliance's assistant director of integrated care, said: "Every child with a life-limiting condition, and every family supporting them, should be able to access high-quality, compassionate palliative and end-of-life care, regardless of where they live.

"ICBs recognise the vital role that children's hospices, community services, specialist teams and voluntary sector partners play in supporting children and their families. As the services are delivered through a range of organisations and arrangements vary across the country, this can make commissioning complex and difficult to compare consistently.

"However, ICBs remain committed to working with families, providers, charities and national partners to reduce unwarranted variation, improve access to care and ensure more people can receive care closer to home."

Continued *from page 1*

Germany blames Russia for Leipzig airport drone attack

for appropriate and necessary action in this situation". It would respond "to this hybrid attack in Leipzig with proportionate and measured, yet equally resolute, action", he said. "We are not at war, but we are a daily target of hybrid warfare."

He added: "The dangerous behaviour of the Russian Federation is part of attempts at destabilisation, disinformation, threats, sabotage and aggression." Berlin regretted the abysmal state of its relations with Moscow, he said.

The EU expressed "full solidarity" with Germany over the attack, and Nato assured Berlin that it would defend its members.

The Russian ambassador had been summoned to the foreign ministry at that very moment to be informed of the consequences, Wadephul said. The Russian consulate in Bonn will be closed later this month, and Russian House, a sprawling cultural and science institute in the centre of Berlin, which is alleged to house Russian spies and to have been the launchpad for a number of hybrid attacks in Germany over the past few years, is to be ejected from its rented building.

A clampdown on Russia's shadow fleet – illegal ships carrying Russian oil and other supplies in the Baltic and North seas – is also planned. Sweden and Finland track and disrupt the shadow fleet but Germany does not, so vessels regularly opt to sail via German waters in its foreign economic zones.

New lists of people on a blacklist would be drawn up and tighter border controls of Russians entering Germany would be carried out, Wadephul said.

Parallel to these moves, Berlin is also backing the European Commission's 22nd package of sanctions, to cover a further 1,600 companies and organisations with a Russian connection. Responding to Germany's announcement, Russia's foreign ministry spokesperson, Maria Zakharova, said Moscow would respond to what she called "anti-Russian action", according to Interfax news agency.

The government has previously said it does not intend to directly involve Nato by invoking article 4 of the alliance. However, its Nato and European partners were informed about the investigation and agreed on the planned consequences, Wadephul confirmed. The Nato secretary general, Mark Rutte, and the president of the European Commission, Ursula von der Leyen, vowed "full solidarity" with Berlin.

Rutte said Berlin had put forward "clear" evidence of Moscow's role in the "hybrid attack" and welcomed the measures announced in response, while von der Leyen vowed to "keep the EU united despite these escalating and serious acts".

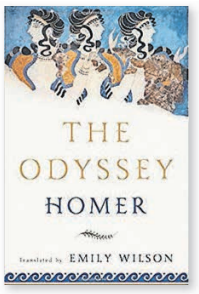
▲ *Johann Wadephul, Germany's foreign minister, left, and Alexander Dobrindt, the interior minister*

Yesterday's announcement was the first time the German government had concretely named Russia as responsible for the attack.

It marks the lowest point for decades in relations between Russia and the EU's largest member, which were already at a low ebb over Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine. It comes before critical elections in the eastern states of Saxony-Anhalt and Mecklenburg-Vorpommern, in which the war in Ukraine and relations with Russia have been a focal point.

The far-right populist AfD, which is pushing a pro-Russia agenda as it seeks to win an absolute majority in the Saxony-Anhalt state election this weekend, has accused the government of double standards over its treatment of Russia. Urging the government to prove Russia's involvement in the Leipzig incident earlier this week, it said the same rigour should be applied to investigations into the attack on the Nord Stream pipeline, for which Ukraine is alleged to have been responsible.

Odyssey expert who took aim at 'abysmal' big screen epic is to retranslate poem from scratch



Emily Wilson's 2017 translation became a bestseller and was praised for making Homer's 3,000-year-old epic poem modern and accessible

Emma Loffhagen

Emily Wilson, the first woman to translate Homer's Odyssey into English, is to retranslate the ancient Greek epic poem from scratch less than a decade after the publication of her acclaimed version.

The announcement comes after Wilson attracted controversy this summer with a scathing assessment of Christopher Nolan's blockbuster film adaptation of The Odyssey, which she slammed for its "abysmal" writing and lack of sex scenes.

Wilson's 2017 translation became a bestseller and was praised for making the 3,000-year-old epic poem modern and accessible.

"I'm now retranslating The Odyssey from scratch, with an approach closer to that of my translation of the Iliad, using somewhat more lines than the original, enabling more varied word-length and pacing," she told the New York Times. "It's a complete retranslation. Not a revision of the old version," she told the Associated Press. "I'm about halfway through."

Nolan cited Wilson's 2017 translation, including its opening sentence – "Tell me about a complicated man" – as an influence on his adaptation of the poem, released in July this year and starring Tom Holland, Zendaya, Matt Damon and Anne Hathaway.

Nolan's adaptation took the global box office by storm, making $264m (£196m) during its first weekend, marking the director's best ever opening. Book sales saw a huge bump too: UK print sales of the poem increased by 1,400% in the four weeks to 25 July compared with the same period in 2025, after the film's release in the middle of the month.

Wilson made headlines for her attack on Nolan's version. Writing in the London Review of Books, she said: "Nolan's Odyssey lacks many of the elements that make the poem great … The writing is abysmal."

She continued: "None of the characters has convincing motivation for their actions or words. There are no sex scenes, and all the food looks horrible," adding, "I would be ashamed to have written any part of this script."

Her criticism attracted strong reactions, including from the novelist Joyce Carol Oates, who accused Wilson of "haughty superiority".

Wilson's decision to retranslate the poem predates the row over the film. In an interview recorded in the spring for the ancient-history podcast Instant Classics, she discussed her desire to return to Homer and approach the poem differently from her first translation.

"I'm proud of my Odyssey translation … I think there are lots of good things about the kinds of compression and choices that I was forced into," Wilson said then.

She has indicated that she will "probably" keep the "Tell me about a complicated man" opening line. Wilson added that her original translation relied too heavily on the word "slave", when more precise terminology could have better reflected the different forms of enslavement depicted in the poem.

The new translation will also give readers far more of Wilson's scholarly commentary. "I'm also going to quadruple the number of endnotes because endnotes are really fun to write," she said.

While Wilson's decision to retranslate Homer's poem is unusual, it is not without precedent.

"Translators quite often rework or rewrite their own previous translations," said Matthew Reynolds, professor of English and comparative criticism at Oxford University. "Elizabeth Barrett Browning completely rewrote her translation of Aeschylus's Prometheus Bound, Ezra Pound repeatedly revised his translations of Guido Cavalcanti, and Yu JongHo translated Jane Eyre into Korean first in 1970 and again in 2004."

He added: "It shows that translation – especially literary translation – is a continual exploratory process of interpretive reimagining and re-making."

Matt Damon as Odysseus and Zendaya as Athena in Nolan's film. Below, a scene from the poem at the Bardo museum in Tunis, Tunisia

PHOTOGRAPHS: MELINDA SUE GORDON/UNIVERSAL PICTURES; KPZFOTO/ALAMY STOCK PHOTO

Dyson toothbrush will give users a dentist's-eye view – for £419

Zoe Wood

It is the livestream you never wanted to see but may find hard to resist: video beamed live from inside of your mouth while you clean your teeth.

Dyson, the consumer appliance company that made its name inventing bagless vacuums and bladeless fans, has turned its attention to oral hygiene with a £419, all-singing, all-dancing toothbrush that can clean, floss and even spray tiny jets of mouthwash.

In a simpler time a handle and bristles were enough, but the Dyson toothbrush, which took six years and 661 engineers to develop, features a "100k pixel macro lens camera" and an "anti-gravity (mouthwash) tank".

The camera functions as a "high-quality endoscope", according to the company, enabling users to "see what their dentist sees".

The brusher can watch "live cleaning footage" on the MyDyson app and get feedback on their tooth brushing regime.

James Dyson, the company's founder and chief engineer, launched the toothbrush at an event in Paris yesterday.

Engineers at the company – which despite the billionaire inventor's support for Brexit moved its corporate base to Singapore in 2019 – had "spent well over a decade understanding oral care regimes and how nasties build up in the mouth", Dyson said.

The rigorous process included developing a "proxy plaque" so they could test plaque removal. Flossing was an "awkward and time-consuming chore" and "few of us do it even though we know we should", he added. "Our research has shown that people consistently miss the areas where plaque forms – the gaps between teeth."

And while you will be familiar with the process of moving a toothbrush up and down with your hand, Dyson said that by "combining a camera, machine learning, precision fluid dynamics, advanced brushing technologies, connectivity and WiFi", the toothbrush offered an "entirely new way to keep your mouth healthy".

James Dyson shows off his hi-tech toothbrush at the launch in Paris

When the camera detects gaps between teeth, a jet releases a burst of mouthwash to remove plaque while the brush head cleans along the gumline and lifts surface stains.

Dyson is entering a crowded field, with dozens of hi-tech toothbrushes already on the market.

However, Eddie Crouch, the British Dental Association chair, said: "Patients shouldn't be lulled into thinking the latest gizmos will solve all their oral health problems. Big brands with high price tags are no substitute for a proper routine."

▼ *A soldier holds a baby who was rescued along with her mother from areas cut off by the floods*
PHOTOGRAPH: UMESH KARKI/AP

Rescuers continue hunt for missing workers as death toll passes 1,000

◀ *Nepali soldiers work to clear a tunnel near a hydropower site in Rasuwa; 279 people have been saved from hydroelectric projects so far*
PHOTOGRAPH: NEPAL ARMY/REUTERS

Cait Kelly
Kathmandu

Nepali rescuers have built temporary bridges to reach remote areas and dug through the ruins of hydropower projects in the Himalayas to rescue hundreds of trapped workers as the death toll passed 1,000 nearly a week after the devastating floods.

About 600 people remain trapped in several hydropower stations that have become the focus of rescue efforts. Nepal's prime minister, Balendra Shah, said more than 11,000 people had been rescued across the affected region, and power and communication lines had been restored in some areas. "Thousands of citizens have lost their homes, families, loved ones and property," Shah said.

Six days after the catastrophe struck the Himalayan border region, 4,400 people were still missing in Nepal and Tibet. Police in Kathmandu have urged the relatives of missing tourists to provide DNA samples to assist in identification efforts.

In a statement on social media, Nepali police on Monday asked relatives of the missing to "provide a fresh blood sample for DNA profiling and two passport-sized photographs" to the pathology laboratory at the Nepal police hospital in Kathmandu, or the nearest district police office.

Among Nepal's list of the missing are 592 foreigners, including tourists who had come for mountain trekking and Hindu pilgrims travelling to Tibet's sacred Mount Kailash, from countries including India, the US, UK, Australia and Canada.

Relatives abroad have been asked to undergo DNA profiling at an authorised laboratory and to "send a soft copy of the DNA profile to Nepal police's official email address".

In some of Nepal's flood-affected areas, hundreds of unidentified bodies have already been buried because they are decomposing and there is no room left in hospitals or morgues.

At the police hospital in Kathmandu yesterday, more than 100 people were waiting to have their blood sampled. Among them was Prakaiti Jurnj. Her mother was still missing, but the family had been able to identify her father's body from a photograph on the wall outside the teaching hospital, where images of the deceased had been posted in an effort to identify the victims.

"Both my father and mother, they were in the village in Nukawot. They were both swept away by the flood," she said. "We haven't heard from them since Wednesday. We found my father's body; my brother saw the photo on the wall."

She was waiting for her two other siblings, who live in the UK, to arrive yesterday so they could all try to get up to the village. She said she wanted to contact her grandmother or sister-in-law; she thinks both survived the flood because their house is further up the mountain. Their village was still in a blackout, and making contact was impossible.

"I can't go there; the situation is very bad," she said. "I can't go up there alone. I am not sure if we'll be able to get them."

> ***'Both my father and mother were swept away. We found my father's body'***
>
> **Prakaiti Jurnj**
> *Kathmandu*

The disaster was triggered by a glacier collapse that sent a deluge of ice, rock and mud through Nepal's border region with China, posing a massive challenge for the country's six-month-old government.

The region is vulnerable to flooding and landslides, and extreme weather events have become more common because of warming due to human-caused climate change.

In a late-night social media post, Shah said aid worth more than $42m (£31m) had poured into the country, but that Nepalis were reeling. "The government understands the immense pain they are enduring," the prime minister said. "The path ahead is to support them through this suffering and help them return to normal life through rehabilitation."

Shah also said that 279 workers had so far been rescued from hydropower projects, where authorities estimated close to 1,000 people had been trapped. Days after the disaster, hope was rapidly diminishing that any of those trapped in a series of tunnels could be alive.

Pictures and videos shared by rescue teams showed earth-moving equipment digging and shovelling mud and rocks under lights in the dark of the night.

Chinese state media coverage has focused largely on the official response, highlighting the deployment of firefighters, the People's Liberation Army and instructions from top leaders. Little is known about victims on the Chinese side.

The flood was "caused by glacier instability under the long-term effects of global warming", China's state broadcaster said on Monday.

Shah said the catastrophe signalled the risks the Himalayan region faces. "The time has come for us to strongly raise before the international community the disasters we are experiencing as a consequence of climate change," he wrote in his post.

'Mistaken' British aid worker listed as survivor

A British relief worker was mistakenly identified by Nepalese authorities as a rescued survivor after returning to Kathmandu on a humanitarian aid flight.

Alastair Chambers, a 45-year-old former Gloucester councillor, said he flew to Nepal last week to distribute sleeping bags, food and essentials to communities cut off by collapsed bridges.

After spending several days in a village near the Trishuli River in central Nepal, Chambers returned by helicopter to the capital, where he was greeted by police officers asking for his details.

"I gave them my details, just abiding by the rules, and they obviously thought that I'd been rescued," Chambers told the Press Association.

Chambers appeared on a list of 119 names released by local authorities yesterday. An army spokesperson then told reporters at a press conference that a British national was among those rescued.

"I was contacted by about 15 different journalists in the last few hours, just asking how I was and how I'm feeling after being rescued, and I had to say: 'Well, sorry, I haven't been rescued,'" Chambers told PA.

Those reportedly rescued included 118 Nepali nationals – 44 women and 74 men.

Thirty-six British nationals were missing, the Foreign Office minister Stewart Wood told the House of Lords yesterday. The figure had previously been put at 33. The UK Foreign Office was contacted for comment on Chambers' case.

At least 1,050 people have been confirmed dead in Nepal since Wednesday's flash floods, while Chinese state media said 66 people had been killed in Tibet. More than 4,000 people are still missing.
Angus Thomson

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National

Hopes for excluded children after autistic pupil court win

Diane Taylor

The mother of a 10-year-old autistic boy who had his permanent exclusion from a primary school quashed by the high court has said she hopes the ruling helps other children.

The boy, who cannot be named, was permanently excluded after going to school in July 2025 with a replica butterfly knife, which he handed to a friend to use against another child during an altercation in the playground.

The knife was described as having unsharpened blades and rounded ends, and caused no significant injury when used against the child.

The judge said there had been differences of opinion about whether the knife was made of metal or plastic, and that it may have been closer to a "fidget toy" than an unsharpened or training version of a weapon.

The school, part of the Lift academy chain, excluded the boy, first temporarily and then permanently, on the basis of the incident.

In his judgment, the deputy high court judge Alan Bates identified a range of concerns with the way the school and the governors disciplinary panel had reached their decision, including whether the decision was proportional.

He said permanent exclusion should be "a tool of last resort" and that those considering whether to exclude a child should make a careful assessment of whether allowing them to return to the school would seriously harm the welfare of the pupil or of others at the school.

As a result of this case, the judge recommended that the Department for Education update its guidance about permanent exclusions from schools, saying it could "fairly" be said to be unclear or incomplete.

According to DfE data, in the 2024 autumn term there were 3,700 permanent exclusions from schools in England: 85% of these were in secondary schools, 14% in primary schools and 1% in special schools. It is highly unusual for a case of this kind to reach the high court.

"I am so happy about this high court ruling," the boy's mother said. "I hope it will help the lives of many children and young people in other schools. Both my son and I were so upset about the school's decision to permanently exclude him. We didn't think things had been dealt with fairly. I just felt that they wanted to get rid of my son.

"It was a long and complicated process to fight this and at one point I nearly gave up. But the situation was so upsetting and frustrating that I was determined to continue to challenge the exclusion."

A spokesperson for Lift Schools said: "We respect the court's judgment and are carefully considering its implications. We are reviewing the published detail and will be reflecting the findings in our own exclusion guidance, training and governance arrangements so future decisions clearly evidence the factors considered and the reasoning behind them."

Angelo Monni of Duncan Lewis solicitors, representing the boy, said: "The decision provides important guidance for schools, academy trusts, governors, local authorities and families, and is likely to significantly influence how permanent exclusion decisions are approached in future. The judgment provides important guidance that will need to be followed by schools, and is a vindication for our client and his mother."

A DfE spokesperson said: "We will carefully consider the judgment and the judge's observations. Permanent exclusion should only ever be a last resort, used to protect the education or welfare of the pupil or others in the school community. Headteachers must consider any contributing factors, including whether a pupil's behaviour may stem from an unmet need or a special educational need or disability.

"We've recently updated our statutory exclusion guidance and will keep it under review, so schools, governing boards and independent review panels have the clarity they need."

PHOTOGRAPH: OLI SCARF/AFP/GETTY

He who dares ... A driver limps home on a wing and a prayer in the Reliant Robin rally at Vandemonium in King's Lynn. Full contact racing was encouraged across three different classes: 'bangers' limited to 1600cc; Reliant Robins, and 'big van bangers' – a mix of minibuses, horseboxes, camper vans and panel vans.

Five held on suspicion of murder over stabbing death of newborn

Angus Thomson

Five people were being held on suspicion of murder yesterday after a newborn baby died from stab wounds in South Yorkshire on Sunday.

Police officers found the girl at a property in Holywell Heights, in the Wincobank area of Sheffield, while responding to reports concerning her safety just before 6am on Sunday. She was pronounced dead at the scene.

Seven people were arrested on suspicion of murder. Two have since been bailed.

A postmortem examination found the girl had died from stab wounds, police said yesterday.

DCI Tom Woodward of South Yorkshire police said first responders, paramedics and detectives now leading the murder investigation had been profoundly affected by the baby's death.

"We recognise this is deeply distressing for those who would have loved to have a chance to love this baby girl, for the emergency services who responded and for the community who will inevitably be shocked by this incident," Woodward said.

"Everyone involved in responding to this tragedy – from the first officers and paramedics on the scene to the detectives now leading the investigation – has felt the profound impact of this investigation.

"Our commitment to this little girl is unwavering," Woodward added.

"We will confront every difficult and distressing challenge and pursue every line of inquiry with determination and care to secure justice for her."

Woodward said the investigation was fast-moving and asked the community to "avoid speculating around the circumstances of this tragic incident".

He added: "We know the local community will hold her in their thoughts and support us as we work through this complex investigation."

Five suspects remain in custody after police were granted a warrant for further detention, a force spokesperson said yesterday.

A 26-year-old and a 37-year-old have been released on bail.

Specialist search officers will remain in the Holywell Heights area as the investigation continues.

South Yorkshire police said anyone with information about the case should contact them online or call 101, quoting incident number 993 on 30 August 2026.

People can also report information to Crimestoppers on 0800 555 111.

Former gang leader's memoirs secure guilty verdict over Tupac Shakur killing

Gabrielle Canon

A jury in Las Vegas has found a former gang leader of the South Side Compton Crips, Duane Keith Davis, guilty of the murder of Tupac Shakur, bringing the case to a close nearly 30 years after the rapper was gunned down.

The jury took about three hours to reach a guilty verdict in a trial that relied heavily on multiple confessions from Davis himself, including his description of the killing in the 2019 memoir Compton Street Legend.

Shakur was born in 1971 in East Harlem, New York, and rose to fame in the early 90s with a poetic flow that doubled as sharp commentary on social injustice, including systemic racism, police brutality and the struggles of marginalised communities.

Widely regarded as one of the greatest rappers to ever live, Shakur is still celebrated around the world decades after his life was cut short. He was only 25 when he died in hospital days after being shot four times in a car near the Las Vegas Strip.

Reverence for the rapper has long inspired conspiracy theories about his death as questions swirled around who was involved, why the case remained open for years, and even whether Shakur was actually dead.

Over the three-week trial, Marc DiGiacomo, the Clark county district attorney, and Binu Palal, the chief deputy district attorney, brought 25 witnesses to the stand, including some who had to be ordered by the court because they were reluctant to testify in the case against Davis.

Davis, 63, was accused of instigating the deadly shooting, although not of pulling the trigger himself. He had spent years telling investigators and interviewers of his direct involvement before he was arrested in 2023.

Davis's attorney, Michael Sanft, tried to frame the stories and statements as the exaggerated claims of a man hoping to benefit from the public interest in and unanswered questions around Shakur's murder.

Prosecutors played eight hours of recordings, taken from four separate events in different years, during which Davis shared in his own words what happened the night of 7 September 1996. Davis wrote that he had hatched the plan to retaliate against Shakur after the rapper's entourage beat up his nephew, Orlando "Baby Lane" Anderson, in the lobby of the MGM Grand earlier that night. Anderson, who died two years later in an unrelated shooting, was a member of a rival gang in Compton, California.

Shakur and the founder of his label, Marion "Suge" Knight, had attended a Mike Tyson boxing match at the casino when the altercation with Anderson took place, and were then on their way to an after-party. A white Cadillac pulled up next to them while they were stopped at a red light, and someone in that car began shooting, according to investigators.

In his book, Davis claimed to have been in that car, and that he had brought a .40-caliber Glock with him. "Them jumping on my nephew gave us the green light to want to do something to their ass," he wrote. "Pac chose the wrong game to play."

Tupac's sister, Sekyiwa "Set" Shakur, cried as the verdict was read, while Davis's son covered his face with his hand, according to the Associated Press.

"It was kinda hard for me to feel so happy at the same time knowing someone is going to jail for so long," an emotional Shakur fan, Jessica Martin, told AP. "But then I looked over at Tupac's family and it reminded me of everything they've gone through."

The Clark county district court judge Carli Kierny scheduled Davis's sentencing hearing for 13 October.

Prosecutors had not sought the death penalty against Davis and, after the verdict, voluntarily dropped their efforts to add a gang enhancement to Davis's conviction.

First-degree murder in Nevada carries penalties ranging from 20 years to life imprisonment. Davis said he planned to appeal against the verdict.

While the trial has finally come to an end, family members had been left to wonder for years why it took so long to reach a conclusion.

"We've been waiting 30 years to grieve properly," Zayd Akinyela, Shakur's cousin, told reporters outside the courtroom. "A lot of people don't get to grieve until they understand what happened to their loved one and how it happened."

An LA Times review of police missteps on the case, published in 2015, detailed how authorities failed to investigate Anderson even after details about the conflict between him and Shakur's entourage became known. Police also declined to follow a lead from a member of Shakur's entourage who claimed he could identify the shooters. That witness died weeks later in a separate shooting, the LA Times reported.

The investigation highlighted how many of Shakur's followers, family members and Black leaders have pointed to the decades-long case as yet another indication of racism in a broken justice system.

Investigators, meanwhile, said it was challenging to prove because they faced resistance from potential witnesses, including other members of the rapper's entourage. Even now, some resisted participating and had to be compelled to come to court.

Davis became the prosecution's lead witness, despite being the defendant. DiGiacomo said during the trial: "Had he decided to never write the book, he would not, probably, have ever been prosecuted."

Far left, Duane Keith Davis, right, and his attorney, Michael Sanft, face court after Davis is found guilty of first-degree murder over the 1996 killing of rapper Tupac Shakur, main image

PHOTOGRAPHS: BIZUAYEHU TESSFAYE/ LAS VEGAS REVIEW-JOURNAL/AP; RAYMOND BOYD/GETTY

Deported far-right commentator 'ashamed' of support for Trump

Anna Betts

Milo Yiannopoulos, the British far-right commentator who was arrested last week by US immigration officers and deported to the UK, said last night that "for the first time I know what it feels like to be really, really terrified".

Yiannopoulos appeared on Piers Morgan Uncensored, a YouTube show hosted by the broadcaster. Yiannopoulos, 41, described the experience in the US as "humiliating and disorientating", "physically degrading" and "frightening". He also said he was "ashamed" of his previous support for Donald Trump, who has pursued an agenda of mass deportation in his second term as president.

"I didn't understand the physical reality of how institutionalised the brutality is in America," he said.

He was deported from the US on Friday after his arrest a day earlier by Immigration and Customs Enforcement officers at New Orleans airport.

In a statement last week, the Department of Homeland Security, the parent agency of ICE, said Yiannopoulos had "legally entered the country" in May 2019 but "chose to overstay his welcome in violation of our nation's laws".

Yiannopoulos was an early supporter of Trump before he first became US president in 2016. He is a former editor of Breitbart News and later worked to help the rapper Ye, formerly known as Kanye West, explore a presidential run in 2024.

The homeland security department said Yiannopoulos was issued with a final order of removal by an immigration judge on 22 July "after failing to show up for his immigration hearing".

Yiannopoulos disputed that account and denied overstaying a visa. He said he is married to an American, and claimed he held a green card he was "renewing on a two-year basis".

The Guardian contacted homeland security and the White House for comment.

"I don't think I've ever been frightened like that before," Yiannopoulos told Morgan. "I think maybe in the past I've been a little bit blase when people talked about their trauma, a little bit cavalier when people talked about stuff kind of lingering with them, but I get it now ... I wouldn't wish it on anyone."

Yiannopoulos said of his past support for Trump: "If I had any clue that anything remotely like this was even possible, I would never have gotten involved in supporting Trump, and I'm very ashamed that I did."

Anger as BBC drops jobs vow to apprentices amid budget cuts

Michael Savage
Media editor

The BBC is facing internal anger after a group of apprentices were told they could no longer expect jobs they had been promised as a result of the corporation's sweeping cuts.

In a sign of the pressure the BBC is under to find savings, apprentices working with BBC News were told "exceptional circumstances" meant the broadcaster could no longer stand by its promise to find them permanent positions.

The Guardian understands some of the apprentices had been repeatedly assured that the job commitment would be honoured.

Insiders said it was a betrayal of the apprentices, who are often selected from non-traditional backgrounds to increase the diversity of the BBC's workforce. Many are from working-class backgrounds.

"They've all been told that their jobs have now been closed and there isn't a permanent role at the end," a source said. "For a place that prides itself on honesty and integrity, it feels pretty dishonest."

Another said: "There are some fairly senior editors who are absolutely raging about what's happening."

The decision affects some of those who are finishing their apprenticeships, which cover graduates and school leavers. Some apprentices from previous years who were still waiting for a permanent post are also affected. About 20 apprentices appear to be affected overall.

The BBC is aiming to cut as many as 2,000 jobs as it seeks £500m in savings by 2028. Further details of those cuts are expected within weeks.

It is understood that at an emergency meeting last week the apprentices were told impending cuts meant it would be unfair to guarantee them a job.

Their scheme has been extended until December to give them time to prepare for the end of their apprenticeships.

> ***'How can we chase young audiences while cutting a young workforce?'***
>
> **BBC insider**

There has been an angry response from some inside the corporation who say a scheme that increases the BBC's diversity and brings in younger voices should have been protected.

"How are we signalling there's still a future of the BBC if we're cutting all the people that we've promised jobs to," said one. "For me, it says a lot about the people who have been protected. There's just so much middle management.

"Morally, we should be investing in young people to come and work here. That just feels so obvious. How can we be chasing young audiences while cutting a young workforce?"

Matt Brittin, the BBC's director general, said last week he had not fully understood the extent of the BBC's financial woes when he took on the job earlier in the year.

The BBC is having to make the cuts as the value of the licence fee has fallen dramatically over the past decade as a result of price freezes. An increasing number of households are opting not to pay it.

The BBC has announced 550 job cuts in news, nations and TV and radio content as part of the first stage in its savings plan. It has about 21,500 full-time employees in total.

Brittin has said popular shows will have to be axed. The first big casualty was BBC Radio 4's The World Tonight.

A BBC spokesperson said: "BBC News needs to make considerable savings, and we have previously announced roles will close across the division at all levels.

"As there are fewer positions, fewer apprentices have been able to secure permanent placements. We are exploring opportunities to retain individuals where possible.

"More broadly, we are committed to providing entry-level roles and training in the industry and will continue to run schemes that provide these opportunities at the start of people's careers."

Ski Sunday cancelled after almost 50 years as TV staple

Tony Paley

A staple of Sunday afternoon TV for almost 50 years is being axed amid complaints that the BBC's sports coverage continues to decline.

The new BBC head of sport, Alex Kay-Jelski, has been under fire recently and will not have endeared himself to some of the licence-paying public with the news yesterday that Ski Sunday is being dropped.

David Vine was the first presenter of the weekly show, which helped alpine skiers such as Franz Klammer, Konrad Bartelski and Michela Figini become household names. There will be no more mentions of glamorous Val-d'Isère and Val Gardena to help brighten winter teatimes.

Ski Sunday became equally famous for its theme tune, a rousing violin-led arrangement called Pop Looks Bach, which was composed by Sam Fonteyn and often ranked near the top of polls and lists of signature TV sports melodies. It was recorded for the Boosey & Hawkes Music Library in 1970.

"If music is licensed from a music library, you never know when it might appear," recalled the composer's son Nicholas when the programme was rebooted in 2008 with the popular theme retained. "So he'd often be sitting there watching and suddenly say: 'That's mine!' He was always delighted when it was on TV and watched avidly, even when it was on that Barbara Woodhouse programme [1980's Training Dogs the Woodhouse Way, for which he also wrote the theme]."

The BBC explained the decision in a press release: "Since its debut in 1978, Ski Sunday has become an iconic part of the winter sports calendar, bringing the excitement, drama and beauty of the action on the snow to audiences across the UK. Changing audience behaviours and the tough financial decisions needed to meet savings requirements mean BBC Sport must continually review how it delivers value for licence fee payers and serves audiences across all platforms. This decision forms part of that process."

Kay-Jelski shocked many in February by arguing that the BBC did not need live rights to a sport to be relevant.

Speaking at the Financial Times business of football conference, the director of sport said: "My challenge to us at the BBC all the time is let's just make sure we are in the conversation of the things that matter. For example, we have audio rights to Formula One but not video rights. But we still have reporting and live pages and digital video that draw in millions and millions and millions of people. You can still be relevant, you can still matter if you don't show the sport."

Kay-Jelski has been criticised for deciding not to have his panel of football experts leave their Salford base for New York until the World Cup semi-finals and for scrapping the Saturday preview programme Football Focus. Last month there were reports of anger among the Match of the Day production team on the eve of the new Premier League season.

In recent years, Ski Sunday had become a magazine-style programme with a wider winter sports remit. Its final presenters were Ed Leigh and the British former downhill racer Chemmy Alcott.

▲ *Ski Sunday's weekly coverage helped make the Austrian racer Franz Klammer a household name*
PHOTOGRAPH: TONY DUFFY/GETTY

▲ *Natalie McDonald and her niece Valentina Foster died in the fire*

Cleveland police to get extra £2m to tackle crime

Josh Halliday
Angus Thomson

Cleveland's police force is to receive a £2m funding boost to tackle serious crime after the home secretary said successive high-profile tragedies in the Middlesbrough area had led to a "sense of disquiet" in the community.

Shabana Mahmood and the prime minister, Andy Burnham, paid tribute in parliament yesterday to police constables Matthew Blades and Tom Clough, who were killed when a Volkswagen Passat travelling on the wrong side of the A66 dual carriageway collided head-on with their marked response vehicle.

Five young men travelling in the Passat, which had earlier been pursued by different police, also died in the 22 August incident. Cleveland police said the five occupants may have had links to "serious organised criminal activity".

The home secretary said Cleveland police were also investigating the house fire in Grangetown that killed Natalie McDonald, 34, and her niece Valentina Foster, 7, and injured four others on 26 August.

Investigators were not treating the fire and the A66 crash – which occurred within a mile of each other – as connected, Mahmood said. "However, it has undoubtedly added to the sense of disquiet in a community already reeling from the earlier tragedy," she said.

The funding announcement came after a 23-year-old man appeared in court on murder charges over the deaths of McDonald and Foster.

Jaden Wright, of no fixed address, appeared before Teesside magistrates court yesterday. Wright was remanded in custody to appear at Teesside crown court tomorrow.

The court clerk outlined that he faces two murder charges, two counts of grievous bodily harm with intent, and two charges of attempted grievous bodily harm with intent. The charges relate to the six people who were in the house, two of whom cannot be identified by the media due to their age.

The clerk said Wright faced a separate charge of intentional strangulation over an incident said to have happened on the day before the fire.

A 31-year-old man who was also arrested in connection with the case was released without charge.

News
Climate crisis

'I'm a national treasure? OK fine'
Joe Lycett on his new show – which is set in a working pub
Life & Arts, page 8 →

Majority of stores. Online may vary. Prices matched against Sainsbury's, Tesco, Asda, GB Aldi and Lidl. Prices matched pro rata & checked on comparable products from GB Aldi stores and Lidl &/or online twice weekly. Asda, Tesco, Sainsbury's checked twice weekly and monthly in store. Prices checked 24/08/26. Morrisons non-promotional prices matched to Sainsbury's, Tesco, Asda, GB Aldi and Lidl non-promotional prices. Excludes Morrisons Daily and third parties. Verification: my.morrisons.com/unbeatables. Serving suggestion.

Hottest UK summer since records began 'only possible due to burning fossil fuels'

Continued *from page 1*

of the climate crisis driven by burning fossil fuels.

The Met Office said an average mean UK temperature of 16.5C made this summer provisionally the warmest on record. England, Wales and Northern Ireland broke their mean temperature records for summer and Scotland recorded its joint sixth hottest summer.

This is the second year in a row that temperature records have been broken, with 2025 and 2026 the warmest British summers since records began.

The summer of 1976 is now the seventh warmest on record in terms of mean temperature.

Katie White, the minister for climate transition, said it was a "brutal reminder that we're not waiting for climate change to arrive in Britain, we're living in the middle of it".

She added: "With kids too hot to sleep, families worrying about older relatives, farmers watching fields dry out, and firefighters and our armed forces battling wildfires, we've all woken up to a reality none of us wants for the people and places we love."

England is on track to record its highest ever number of heat-related deaths this summer. The UK Health Security Agency said on 30 July that an estimated 2,877 people had died in the May and June heatwaves alone.

A study by Met Office scientists showed this summer's heat was made about 130 times more likely because of human-induced climate change. The Met Office's climate projections indicate that British summers will continue to become hotter.

Dr Mark McCarthy, the Met Office's head of climate attribution, said: "The summer of 2026 has been remarkable and is an example of the extremes we can expect to see more frequently as a consequence of human-induced climate change."

Education, health services and transport were all affected by the heat, with many schools closed and hospital appointments cancelled.

In Europe, extreme heat has been linked to at least 35,000 excess deaths over the summer.

▼ *Blackheath in south London was left looking scorched by the heat, which peaked at 38.1C last month*

PHOTOGRAPH: FRASER GRAY/SHUTTERSTOCK

The hot weather has been coupled with extreme and persistent drought and severe wildfires. England had its driest July on record, with only 6.5mm (0.3in) of rainfall, which was 10% of its long-term meteorological average for the month and less than half the previous record low of 13.4mm set in 1911.

A wildfire near the Sizewell nuclear plant in Suffolk caused "total devastation" to a protected landscape, and in Stourbridge 19 homes were destroyed when fires spread across the West Midlands.

In his first Commons address as prime minister yesterday, Andy Burnham referenced the devastating Nepal-Tibet floods and said: "This is what the climate crisis looks like. We have just ourselves experienced what is likely to have been the hottest summer on record. This government will meet the climate challenge, and I can confirm to the house that I will attend Cop31 in Turkey in November."

Today the Conservative party will present a 10-minute rule motion to parliament to repeal the Climate Change Act 2008, which enshrined the UK's legally binding net zero target in law.

▲ *Fire-damaged properties in Stourbridge, West Midlands*

Alasdair Johnstone from the Energy and Climate Intelligence Unit said the act had been designed to reduce short-term political expediency and keep successive British governments on track to cut emissions.

"The science is very clear that reaching net zero emissions is the only way to stop baking in ever-higher temperatures, the likes of which have put the UK on track for its worst harvest on record, pushing up food prices and threatening the basics of our food security," he said.

Dr James Pope, a Met Office climate scientist, said: "This summer will also be remembered for how dry it has been, particularly in the south in July. Looking at climate projections for rainfall, this summer fits closely to what we would expect an average summer to look like in the UK under 3C of global warming, as we expect summers to become both hotter and drier in the future."

Dr Amy Doherty, who leads the Met Office's National Climate Information Centre, said: "The conditions we've seen this summer have broken UK climate records once again. These records are now breaking with increasing frequency, reflecting the influence of human-induced climate change on the temperatures we're experiencing in the UK.

"Particularly notable is how much we've exceeded the previous summer mean temperature record [16.1C], set just last year. The figures also knock the infamous summer of 1976 down to seventh for average summer mean temperature, with the top five warmest summers all occurring since 2003."

▼ *Some trees in southern England are shedding their leaves in an 'early autumn' to cope with extreme heat*

PHOTOGRAPH: GEOFFREY SWAIN/SHUTTERSTOCK

El Niño event
Trees stressed by heatwaves 'at risk from high winds'

Pippa Neill
Environment reporter

High winds associated with El Niño could cause widespread mortality among tree species weakened by a prolonged period of extreme heat and drought, experts have said.

Much of Europe has been scorched by a series of record-breaking climate crisis-induced heatwaves this summer. The impact has been noticeable across much of the English countryside, where once green land is brown and many trees are wilting and losing their leaves early in an "early autumn" to cope with the extreme heat.

Kevin Martin, the head of tree collections at Kew Gardens in London, said that to cope with these extreme conditions trees had not grown as they normally would, becoming less flexible and more brittle.

"If we see the extreme winds that are predicted this year because of El Niño, we're going to see potentially large impacts on trees," he said.

The Met Office has said the El Niño event, the development of warmer sea surface temperatures in the Pacific Ocean, is expected to be the strongest for more than a century, with increased rainfall and storms forecast to hit the UK this autumn as a result. El Niño is a natural phenomenon that has been made worse by global heating.

▲ *Trees stressed by extreme heat and drought in Slough, Berkshire*

Martin said extreme weather could lead to root death in trees, whereby dry weather followed by heavy rain can undermine soil structure.

"We could then start to see some trees actually fail at the root plate," he added. "I'm really worried about this autumn."

This year's weather has been so extreme that Martin said some species could be lost completely from certain landscapes.

"We may lose species like the silver birch, the common beech and oak from landscapes where we're used to seeing them," he said.

While the impact is widespread, the heat has disproportionately affected the oldest trees, with experts warning England's ancient oaks have been dying in the hot, dry weather.

What made this year so unprecedented was the spring heatwave, when temperatures reached 35C, making it the hottest May ever recorded, Martin said.

"The whole growing season has been under stress. I don't think we've ever experienced environmental impact like this before," he added.

Simon Richmond, a technical officer at the Arboricultural Association, said trees were very resilient organisms able to adapt to one-off years of extreme weather.

However, he said the "danger that we face now is the likelihood with climate change of this being a prolonged pattern of weather".

Kew Gardens lost more than 400 trees due to heat and drought after the 2022 heatwave. Martin said the impact of this summer's heatwave could be much worse.

He predicted that there would be a "significant amount of mortality" at Kew and across south-east England.

"From what I can see from the landscape here at Kew, we're going to see a lot more mortality than what we saw in 2022 because a lot of trees that just got through 2022 are not going to make it through this year," he added.

He said the full impact would not be known for two to three years.

Marcus Lindner, a principal scientist at the European Forest Institute, said several years of extreme weather could push certain species over the edge, with almost all tree species at risk from climate change.

"Species that are normally drought-tolerant are adapted to a certain level of drought stress, but if we have repeated drought these trees will at some point not be comfortable with that any more," he added.

Storm names
Dogs, toddlers and Shaun the Sheep honoured

Jamie Grierson

From a five-year-old weather enthusiast to a beloved animated sheep, the inspiration for the list of storm names for this autumn and winter is wide and varied.

Austen, Boelo and Chloe will be the first named storms of this winter, meteorologists have revealed, after more than 40,000 suggestions were submitted by the public.

The UK's Met Office, in partnership with Ireland's Met Éireann and the Dutch national weather forecasting service KNMI, released the list for the 2026-27 season on Monday.

People submitted names in honour of a much-loved labrador puppy, meteorological pioneers, and Shaun the Sheep from the animation Wallace and Gromit.

The Met Office said the purpose of naming storms was serious as it helped people take notice, prepare and stay safe in severe weather.

The organisations have been naming storms since 2015, with the list running from September to the following August.

In the past year, four names were used from the list, reaching the letter D with Storm Dave on 1 April, although the UK was also affected by a further three storms named by other European meteorological services: Benjamin, Claudia and Goretti.

The third name in this year's list, Chloe, was selected by the Met Office after being put forward more than 120 times, including by the mother of a five-year weather enthusiast who is "fascinated by the weather" but can also "create a storm by herself" when she is tired.

The name Finn was suggested for a two-year-old boy described by his family as "wild and a force to be reckoned with", while Ivy was nominated in honour of a nine-month-old labrador puppy affectionately known as "the absolute destructor".

Shaun also joins the list after a public vote that was run as part of a collaboration with the British animation studio Aardman, which is behind Wallace and Gromit.

Holly Clements, the Met Office head of warnings and guidance, said: "For more than a decade, storm naming has helped us communicate the risks from severe weather more effectively. A named storm provides a clear focus for forecasts and warnings, helping more people understand the potential impacts and take action to protect themselves, their families and their property."

Storms are given a name when they are deemed to have the potential to have a medium or high impact in the UK, Ireland or the Netherlands. Wind is the primary focus, although additional issues such as rain or snow are also considered.

▼ *Andy Burnham speaks to John Healey, the chancellor, at his first Commons address as prime minister*
PHOTOGRAPH: HOUSE OF COMMONS

Burnham says UK must face up to 'wrong turns' taken over past 40 years

Continued *from page 1*

a tricky first byelection test for Burnham in a London seat where the Greens will fancy their chances.

The cabinet was told yesterday that the government would have three key priorities: cutting costs of essentials such as childcare and mortgages, the regeneration of communities, and greater public control of water, housing and energy.

Burnham's deputy, Louise Haigh, will lead taskforces on those issues, the Guardian understands. He told ministers they must be "relentless" in fulfilling his priorities.

His plans are set against a tough economic backdrop. The chancellor's headroom against Labour's fiscal rules could be halved at his first budget if the current global bond sell-off persists, and economists warn mortgage rates could go up this autumn. In the Commons, the prime minister also:

- Hinted he would commit to spending 3% of GDP on defence by 2030, saying he had appointed John Healey as his chancellor "precisely because" of his position on military spending.
- Signalled he is open to renationalising the water industry – saying he is looking at "all possible solutions", as the sector is a "leaking monument" to the failures of privatisation.
- Opened the door to looking again at electoral reform in Labour's next manifesto. "I do believe there needs to be a mandate to make that change. But I believe we will need to get a consensus at the next election. And if there is that consensus, then a change can be made in the next parliament."
- Announced he would attend the Cop31 climate summit in Turkey and continue pursuing green energy but would be "pragmatic" on supply, amid expectations he will approve the Jackdaw gasfield. "The mistake is saying it's got to be one or the other for political purposes. The truth is, it's going to have to be both."

Flanked by Healey and Haigh, the prime minister suggested the Brexit vote had been a response to "a series of wrong turns" made by Britain from the 1980s onwards that were then compounded by leaving the EU.

Burnham has previously argued it would be a mistake to rerun the referendum – but has said he wants the UK to rejoin in his lifetime. He suggested the next UK-EU reset summit could take place in November.

"Political power was centralised, economic power privatised, the country deindustrialised. Austerity followed, hollowing out councils and depriving them of the agency to act to reverse any of this," he said during a three-hour stint in the Commons.

"And then Brexit compounded the damage, ushering in a decade of low growth and stalled regeneration. Change begins with honesty … Unless we are blunt about what went wrong, we won't turn things around.

"Far from taking back control, the combination of these policies took control out of the hands of communities up and down Britain for 40 years. Too many places have been drifting."

He added: "The government I lead will be relentless in giving people and places what they were promised 10 years ago, ownership and control, and from that control over their destiny comes change and growth."

The Conservative leader, Kemi Badenoch, accused the prime minister of "living in the past" over his attacks on Thatcher – who was in power from 1979 to 1990 – and four decades of neoliberalism.

In the statement, Burnham paid tribute to Starmer, saying he had created a platform for Britain to be fixed. Just hours earlier, his predecessor announced he would be standing down as MP for Holborn and St Pancras, despite saying in July he planned to stay on until the next election.

"It has been a huge honour and privilege to represent the best constituency in the country," he said. "I will now focus on other things and that will be international affairs including defence, security, trade and technology in a fast-changing world."

Burnham's first taskforce will be charged with finding bold solutions to tackling "everyday rip-offs". The cost of living taskforce will look at parking charges, subscription traps and cowboy builders as well as long-term fixed pressures such as mortgages, food costs and childcare.

The second will assess the affordability and practicalities of the state taking over failing essential services, with Burnham believing greater state control of essential services is the surest way to economic growth.

Government sources said Haigh, the first secretary of state, wanted to look beyond sectors such as transport and explore opportunities for greater state control in areas including energy and housing – if it would bring down ordinary people's costs.

The third taskforce will explore more radical ideas to revive crumbling high streets and impoverished districts, such as potential legislative options on houses of multiple occupancy, as well as devolving powers to mayors and councils to help them regenerate local high streets.

Burnham in particular is keen to explore how to replicate the regeneration of Stockport, where billions were invested in housing and event spaces, which he said should be a blueprint for towns across the UK.

Sketch
John Crace

Just time for one more U-turn: Keir can't resist the opportunity to upstage his nemesis

No good deed goes unpunished. Or any deed for that matter. It was only a few weeks ago that Keir Starmer was insisting he would remain an MP until the next general election. So we should all probably have guessed that he would be off at the earliest opportunity. U-turns were a distinguishing feature of his two years in office.

And what former prime minister could resist upstaging the new one hours before his first appearance at the government dispatch box for 16 years? Especially when the new one had been plotting his downfall for at least a year. It's what everyone would have wanted. Right?

Not that Starmer was framing his decision in these terms. This wasn't a simple matter of revenge. Or a need to still feel relevant. These were the last things on his mind. Keir has only ever wanted what was best for Andy. But he now had his own life to think about. And why tell the world about it on a bank holiday weekend when nobody is paying attention to the news, when you can wait till the first day of the new parliamentary session and grab the headlines?

Meanwhile, Burnham could probably live with being pushed down the news agenda for the day. He had mixed feelings about Keir's decision. In the long run life would probably be easier without Starmer around to cause trouble but the downside was a potentially tricky byelection. Especially if Zack Polanski chose to stand for the Greens. And never forgetting an almost obligatory appearance from Count Binface. But this was for another day. He had a Commons statement to negotiate.

Andy's life will probably be easier without Starmer around but the downside will be a tricky byelection

First, it was a time to be gracious. After saying he would be following his predecessors in reaffirming his commitment to Ukraine, Burnham spent the first few minutes of his speech praising Keir. He had given a lifetime of service, had created a platform for change and had made Labour electable again. You could almost believe he was sorry to see him go.

Then we got to the heart of the matter. Less policy, more positive vibes. Andy hadn't come to the Commons to pick a fight with the opposition. Rather he hoped they would listen to him, realise he was right and then work with him. It was a big ask – especially with Kemi Badenoch as leader of the opposition: she is so disinhibited she can pick a fight with herself – but probably worth a go.

We ran through a wishlist. The climate crisis. Surely no one was going to argue with that, not after the emergency in Nepal and the hottest summer on record? You could sense Kemi longing to intervene, to say that net zero was a con. It took all her self-control not to make an idiot of herself.

Burnham continued. Small boat crossings down: tick. More prison places for the right kinds of prisoner: fingers crossed. Defence: that would be sorted later, somehow. The cost of living: we need to be honest that the country has been in decline since 1980.

"I will be relentless about achieving change and growth," he said. Let the good times roll. Ish. We can make the next decade better than the first, he concluded. That suddenly didn't feel quite so comforting. I mean, the next 10 years can hardly be worse than the shitshow of the last 10 years. Can it? We need some reason to get out of bed each morning.

▲ *Keir Starmer announces his decision to resign as prime minister during a speech in Downing Street on 20 July*

PHOTOGRAPH: RYAN JENKINS/ GETTY IMAGES

Keir Starmer

Ex-PM to quit Commons, saying it's the 'right time'

Jessica Elgot
Deputy political editor

Keir Starmer is to quit as the Labour MP for Holborn and St Pancras, saying yesterday that it is the "right time" for him to leave the Commons.

Starmer, who resigned as prime minister in July, told the Camden New Journal he wanted to focus on international affairs and "pass the baton to a successor".

Starmer had said he would seek to serve out his term as a backbench MP, and his decision to quit will result in a byelection. The Green party leader, Zack Polanski, is understood to be considering a run for the central London seat.

Starmer told the newspaper: "It has been a huge honour and privilege to represent the best constituency in the country and to have taken over from Frank Dobson, who was such a great constituency MP and a member of the last Labour government.

"I will now focus on other things and that will be international affairs including defence, security, trade and technology in a fast-changing world.

"I will also continue, as I have done for a long time now with others, work on combating violence against women and girls."

Starmer's constituency, long seen as a safe Labour seat, is expected to be targeted by the Greens, potentially for Polanski, who is a London assembly member.

"Zack has always made it clear he would like to be a London MP. London has been his home for over 20 years," a Green party spokesperson said yesterday.

The independent candidate Andrew Feinstein was Starmer's closest challenger at the 2024 general election. Feinstein, who had been close to Jeremy Corbyn, was then involved in Your Party but resigned amid disagreements over party finances.

Starmer told the newspaper he had decided over the summer that he wanted to focus on international work and that meant he had to step down as an MP.

"I think once you've been prime minister, it's important to answer the question: what are you going to do next? Having decided I'm going to concentrate on international affairs, I think it's right to step down," he said.

Starmer said he was proud of his work in the constituency since 2015 as well as his achievements as prime minister. "I want to thank all of those I was privileged to work with in the constituency on issues that matter hugely: affordable housing, first-class education and the work we did on knife crime through the Camden youth support," he said.

He said his local party "always had my back", adding: "They have been resolute in their support for me, firstly in becoming an MP and then becoming the leader of Labour party and then as prime minister."

The Conservative party chair, Kevin Hollinrake, said it was "fitting that his final act as a member of parliament is yet another U-turn, having pledged to stay on. "The decision to stand down will mean a costly byelection for taxpayers at a time when Andy Burnham and John Healey are plotting tax rises on hard-working families across the country."

'Nice before he became leader'

Mixed views in constituency

Helena Horton

In Keir Starmer's north London constituency, full of pretty pubs and elegant townhouses, few tears were being shed at the news of his departure as its MP. One man nursing a pint outside a pub in Kentish Town simply remarked "good" when informed his MP had quit. He added: "I thought he was very nice before he became prime minister, I met him a few times, but he messed the country up and screwed over pensioners."

Annie, a 30-year-old doctor having a coffee on a bench near the tube station, said: "I think everyone here wanted him to leave. He's had a rough time of it, sure, but we have all had enough of him."

Dominic Ford, a 75-year-old pensioner reading a book outside the Parakeet pub, was more sympathetic. "I think he's sensible. It would have been tough for him to sit behind the new prime minister," he said. "He's a very nice, honest guy, and he was very visible around here. We used to see him going to the Arsenal with his son. He was a good local MP, and very honest. I felt very sorry for him when he resigned as prime minister."

On a quiet street, among rows of pastel-coloured terraced houses, is the Pineapple, Starmer's favourite pub. It is out of the way of the high street, and the former prime minister is frequently seen there.

He may have become tired of his pub visits being documented in various newspapers, because when the Guardian visited and asked regulars what they thought about him stepping down the bar staff firmly said that questions about Starmer were not allowed. Perhaps this commitment to discretion is why he has referred to the pub as his "church" and "the best pub in the land".

▲ *Arrests for Palestine Action signs are 'disgraceful', says Laura Hyland*

Starmer had previously said he would seek to serve out his term as a backbench MP, and his decision to quit will spark a byelection. The Green party's leader, Zack Polanski, is understood to be considering a run for the seat.

Yesterday Starmer told the Camden New Journal he wanted to focus on international affairs and "pass the baton to a successor".

Laura Hyland, a 67-year-old artist, said she welcomed the prospect of a byelection. "I am pleased he [stepped] down. He gave very little support for Palestine, and I hope Andy Burnham will be more supportive. Arresting people for holding signs saying 'I support Palestine Action' was disgraceful."

Anita, 52, was doing her shopping on the high street. She also welcomed him standing down, and said: "I can't stand him. He was completely useless and I am glad he stood down."

Lewis Galloway, 43, who works in marketing, said he would have liked to have seen Starmer continue to serve his constituency. "It's a shame that he's standing down," he said, "It is a real shame to lose him from this form of public service so prematurely."

Miliband: UK will take action over Israel's expanded settlement plans

Kiran Stacey
Policy editor

Ed Miliband has promised to "reset" Britain's policy on Israel, saying he will try to stop British companies helping to build settlements in the West Bank.

Speaking to the Commons for the first time as foreign secretary, Miliband said he would set out measures to prevent UK involvement in projects such as the illegal E1 plan, which critics say would split the West Bank in half.

Yesterday's comments came after Israel issued tenders for about a third of the 3,400 homes planned for the E1 project.

Miliband called the settlement proposals "the crossing of a red line", adding: "It cuts through the heart of the West Bank and risks making a Palestinian state unviable. This government will not acquiesce in the destruction of the two-state solution. We will act, and I will set out a comprehensive set of measures in the coming weeks.

"I want a comprehensive reset of our approach on these issues because it is necessary, it is high time."

Ministers have been under pressure for weeks to place tighter sanctions on Israel, specifically in relation to the E1 plan.

Last month, Israel invited companies to bid for contracts to build 1,200 homes for the project, covering more than 4.5 sq miles between East Jerusalem and the settlement of Ma'ale Adumim.

Earlier this year a group of former British diplomats called on the government to threaten action against any companies bidding to build any illegal settlement "designed to divide the West Bank in two and destroy Palestine's viability". They warned that E1 was part of Israel's "systemic West Bank annexation".

'The settlement cuts through the heart of the West Bank and risks making a Palestinian state unviable'

Ed Miliband
Foreign secretary

Other governments have condemned the project. The German chancellor, Friedrich Merz – usually one of Israel's staunchest defenders – called it a "big mistake".

Earlier this month the UK joined a group of 20 other countries, including France, Germany and Italy, as well as the European Union, to issue a joint a statement calling E1 unacceptable.

The statement added: "The E1 settlement will undermine the prospect of the two-state solution by driving a wedge through the West Bank and harming the territorial contiguity of the Palestinian territories."

Miliband said: "We need to look, and we are looking indeed, at our wider economic relationship with the occupied territories and the different tools we have to tackle it. I want to be very clear: we do not want British companies financing, constructing, or advertising new settlements. The work we are now undertaking is how we can stop that. And as I say, I'll have more to say soon."

Ministers are under pressure, meanwhile, to go further and ban trade in goods and services with people or organisations linked to illegal settlements.

The Labour MP James Naish said yesterday: "Does the foreign secretary accept that this pace of expansion shows that current UK measures are failing to change Israeli government behaviour, and that a trade ban is now the necessary next step?"

The Foreign Office minister Stephen Doughty indicated this could be included in the government's measures. He said: "We have absolutely condemned the settler violence, the settler terrorism that we have seen, absolutely our condemnation of the proposals for E1 and all illegal settlements, and indeed we have joined other countries around the world in condemning this proposal and been very, very clear with the government of Israel that this must stop.

"The prime minister has been very clear that we need to do more, including looking at further sanctions, both those involved in the violence in Gaza, but also looking at measures to ban trade in goods with illegal settlements."

The Israeli embassy to London responded by referring to previous comments by Gideon Sa'ar, Israel's foreign minister, who said: "If Britain acts against the state of Israel, the state of Israel will act against Britain. We have the tools. The period is over when people act against the state of Israel and the state of Israel doesn't respond."

Sa'ar did not explain how Israel would retaliate against Britain but it has reportedly looked at expelling diplomats.

Reform Farage urged to come clean over finances as he is sworn in as MP

Rowena Mason
Whitehall editor

Nigel Farage is facing questions about why he claimed his finances were the subject of a second standards investigation, as he was sworn in again yesterday as the MP for Clacton.

The Reform UK leader said when he resigned in July the system had become a "political tool" because "yet another standards investigation is under way" into his finances.

He said he wanted the people of Clacton to be the judge of his actions rather than "the establishment" after revelations in the Sunday Times that his friend the convicted fraudster George Cottrell had paid for social media work, accommodation and security before the 2024 election.

However, it is understood the parliamentary commissioner for standards, Daniel Greenberg, had not launched another investigation or widened the scope of the existing one at that point.

Greenberg is believed still not to have decided as recently as two weeks ago, when the inquiry was reopened as Farage was returned with an increased majority.

He launched his first investigation in May into Farage's £5m gift from the Thailand-based donor Christopher Harborne before the 2024 election, which was not declared on the register of MPs' financial interests. Initially, Farage said the money was given to him to pay for his security, then he described it as a reward for campaigning for Brexit.

At least two complaints were submitted in July about Farage's funding by Cottrell. Farage called a byelection on 7 July and the initial investigation was paused.

Westminster sources said the standards commissioner was assessing information. There is no official confirmation that he has widened his inquiry to include the Cottrell donations, and the commissioner's list of investigation currently only includes the one launched in May.

The sources said Greenberg wanted to see further evidence that Farage had broken the rules in relation to donations from Cottrell in the year before the 2024 election, including payments for social media work.

Farage has maintained the videos were personal and likened his public role before the election to the work of an influencer. However, a number of the videos were political in nature. Critics say these should be declared under rules that require donations related to politics to be registered in the 12 months before an MP is elected.

▲ *Nigel Farage is sworn in as the Reform MP for Clacton after winning a byelection held last month*
PHOTOGRAPH: HOUSE OF COMMONS

The standards commissioner declined to comment on the status of the investigation into Farage and whether any decision had been made on widening the inquiry.

If there is no second investigation or a widened scope, it is possible the first investigation into Farage could conclude sooner than expected. The Times reported in July that the Reform UK leader would be interviewed within weeks, but the byelection paused the process.

▲ *George Cottrell, the convicted fraudster and friend of Farage*

Alex Burghart, the shadow chancellor of the duchy of Lancaster, said: "The questions surrounding Nigel Farage's £5m gift from Christopher Harborne and the donations from George Cottrell simply aren't going away.

"Farage has already tried to run away with his farcical byelection in Clacton, but he can no longer hide from these questions. He needs to come clean … The public deserves answers and [he] can't keep hiding."

If the standards commissioner finds a breach of the rules, and the separate standards committee of MPs recommends a sanction of more than 10 days of suspension from parliament, Farage could end up facing a second byelection.

As he was sworn in, he told GB News he planned to spend less time in parliament and would be leaving more Westminster work to "Richard Tice and the gang", while he goes on a tour of the country.

Farage will also be setting his priorities for the year ahead in his speech to the Reform conference this week, where he is expected to seek to draw a line under the focus on his finances.

Analysis Challenge for Badenoch is to adapt to the style of new opponent

Alexandra Topping
Political correspondent

When Kemi Badenoch steps up to the dispatch box for prime minister's questions today, she will face a very different opponent. And while all eyes will be on Andy Burnham's first PMQs, those in the Conservative ranks will be watching their own leader's performance just as closely.

Badenoch attempted to get out of the traps quickly this week, instigating a reshuffle of her front bench like a conscientious head girl refilling her pencil case for the start of term. Out went the unassuming shadow chancellor Mel Stride, replaced by the Thatcherite Andrew Griffith. He will lead a new economic unit alongside the shadow City minister Richard Fuller and Claire Coutinho, who will replace Griffith as shadow business secretary and act as his deputy after her parental leave.

Priti Patel was also sacked as shadow foreign secretary and replaced with the former Tory leadership candidate Tom Tugendhat. The attention-grabbing anti-migration MP Katie Lam replaced James Cleverly as shadow communities secretary after he resigned from the shadow cabinet to run for London mayor.

The new shadow cabinet will quietly get its first ensemble outing today, against the soundtrack of 403 excitable Labour MPs keen to show support for their new leader. Her performance will matter.

"Kemi has to change tack because she's facing different opposition," said the Conservative peer and polling expert Lord Robert Hayward. "Like the manager of any football team, you have to adjust to the people you're playing against. Kemi and everyone in the party knows she will have to adapt."

In the final weeks of Keir Starmer's premiership, Badenoch embraced her cage fighter instincts, showing little mercy or grace towards the former prime minister even after he announced his resignation. But early indications suggest she understands that Burnham's folksy Hovis advert charm may require a different approach. Before the start of recess she referred to him as "a pair of eyelashes and a black T-shirt", only for Burnham to playfully counter, in a social media video, "it's dark blue, actually".

"When your opponent is an unpopular prime minister who's been there a while, you can afford to take the gloves off," said the conservative commentator Henry Hill. "But when they are new and in the first flush of their honeymoon, it requires a little more subtlety."

While that is a quality that has rarely been associated with the MP for North West Essex, advisers are likely to have told her to keep her powder dry and see how Burnham plays his hand, said ConservativeHome's editor, Giles Dilnot. "Kemi has her own way of doing things, but she won't necessarily have to land a knockout blow on day one."

Her reshuffle, argues Dilnot, is less a reaction to facing a different type of leader than a move to make her party battle-ready should Burnham announce a snap election in 2027. "Everything has shifted on its axis," said Dilnot. "She knows they have to be ready."

Bringing more recognisable figures into the cabinet, including her former rival Tugendhat – seen as one of the party's surviving One Nation centrists despite his hawkishness on foreign affairs – indicates that Badenoch's summer purge of the "wets" may have pragmatic limits.

Some new faces suggest Badenoch is casting her net wider to find talent. The Scot Andrew Bowie at energy is likely to maintain the "drill, baby, drill" stance that helped the Conservatives win a byelection in Aberdeen South in June.

It is also a tacit recognition that while Badenoch herself is polling relatively strongly, the so-called "Keminaissance" has not translated into support for her party: polling remains dire and has fallen from 25% at the end of 2024 to 19% currently. "Her personal polling has gone up, but it hasn't lifted the party with it," said Hill. "I think there's an understanding that if there was a general election now, they would get absolutely hammered."

The reshuffle is not without risk. Griffith was a Treasury minister during Liz Truss's "mini" budget, and repeatedly defended it during the economic chaos that followed. Critics warn that Tugendhat's hawkishness could lead the party into dangerous territory. Lam's incendiary rhetoric may turn off as many voters as it attracts.

But with conference season ahead, Badenoch had to show she was not only the right woman for the job but that she had a feasible team to run the country, said Dilnot. "Last year was all about Kemi, and this year it has to be about the brand."

Donations Lowe's Restore boosted by first big backer

Rowena Mason

The hard-right Restore Britain party has received its first major donation – £500,000 from an IT entrepreneur – in a sign it may continue to pose a threat to Nigel Farage's Reform UK.

Rupert Lowe, an MP who left Reform UK before starting his own party, announced yesterday that the British businessman Simon Galbraith had contributed two donations of £250,000 this year.

Galbraith said his company Cade Hill Investments had given the money as he believed that "most British people sense Britain's decline".

"There is a centralised, bloated and incompetent state which is increasingly undemocratic, British institutions are unfocused on what they should be for and our democracy doesn't represent the interests and opinions of many," he said in a statement. "Things are worse than most people realise, but the opportunity is much greater than everyone thinks too. If Restore win power, I think it will spark a British renaissance."

The sum is small compared with the millions given to Farage's party by the crypto billionaires Christopher Harborne and Ben Delo, as well as further millions pledged by the Iranian-born billionaire Sasan Ghandehari.

However, Restore Britain's ability to raise a substantial sum from a private donor will improve its potential to challenge Reform UK from the right in targeted areas. The party has previously said it will field a candidate against Farage if he faces a second bylection in Clacton after the standards investigation into his finances is concluded.

£500,000
Donation to Restore Britain from Simon Galbraith, who saw potential for a 'British renaissance'

However, Lowe also offered an olive branch to Farage in August, suggesting the parties could put aside their differences and work together on "mass deportation" of illegal migrants "including women and children", tougher rules on legal migration, a ban on halal and kosher slaughter, the burqa, cousin marriage and sharia courts, and a referendum on the death penalty. He also called for the exclusion of former Tory ministers from any future cabinet.

In response, Farage suggested Lowe was not making a credible "offer" and accused him of "screaming" and "threatening" colleagues when he was in the party ranks.

Announcing Restore's new donation, Lowe said: "I am delighted to announce that British entrepreneur Simon Galbraith has chosen to support Restore Britain, starting with two separate donations totalling £500,000 to our party – I would like to sincerely thank Simon on behalf of our party and our membership."

Scottish ministers to push ahead with price caps on essential foods

Patrick Greenfield

John Swinney insisted yesterday that he still planned to introduce a legally binding price cap on bread, milk and other essential food items in Scotland despite fierce opposition from farming and business groups.

Unveiling the Scottish National party's programme for government – the equivalent to the king's speech – the first minister said he wanted to give "families greater peace of mind at a time of rising prices".

Swinney also announced commitments to restructure local government and NHS boards, introduce a misogyny bill to crack down on violence against women and girls and set a £2 price limit on bus fares in the west of Scotland. He confirmed his government would pilot a minimum income for artists.

But the proposals to limit essential food and drink prices have faced intense criticism from industry groups, which have described the policy as "unnecessary" and a "potty gimmick".

On Monday, 23 food, drink and farming organisations published an open letter arguing that markets were already working to deliver the best possible prices and a cap could increase the cost of household goods.

"Scots benefit from western Europe's most affordable grocery and food supply market," the letter read. "A statutory cap would not address the root causes of elevated food prices: rising production, refrigeration and distribution costs.

"Supply chain shocks after Covid and conflicts in Ukraine and Iran have pushed up fertiliser, fuel and energy costs."

The SNP committed to introducing price controls by the end of the year in a manifesto published before the Holyrood elections in May, framing the scheme as a health measure. Similar initiatives have been implemented in Hungary and Croatia and the UK government encouraged supermarkets to consider voluntary price caps on foodstuffs in May.

▲ *John Swinney, Scotland's first minister, set out his programme for government at Holyrood yesterday*

PHOTOGRAPH: MURDO MACLEOD/THE GUARDIAN

The Scottish government did not specify which essentials would be covered by the law in a consultation paper published yesterday, although Swinney has said that between 20 and 50 products would be included such as rice, cheese and eggs. Any limit would cover only retailers that make more than half of their annual turnover from groceries, have more than 250 employees and make more than £250m a year.

"It is our ambition and intention to put more money in families' pockets, building on what is already the most generous cost-of-living support package anywhere in the UK," Swinney told Holyrood.

> ***'A legal cap wouldn't address the root causes of elevated food prices: rising production costs'***
>
> **Open letter from food industry stakeholders**

"Today we have also begun a formal consultation on the legislation that will introduce a legal price ceiling on a basket of essential food items, giving families greater peace of mind at a time of rising prices."

There is uncertainty over whether any price cap on food and drink essentials would even be legal. The Scottish government is planning to introduce the policy under devolved health powers.

But critics say it would clash with post-Brexit internal UK market rules to stop regulatory divergence between England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Island.

Scotland is facing growing pressure on its finances. The Scottish government estimated last year that there would be a near-£5bn gap in its finances by the end of the decade, with experts warning that difficult choices await over how to fund healthcare, schools and other parts of the public sector.

In his five-year programme for government, Swinney announced a major change to the structure of NHS Scotland, reducing the number of health boards from 14 to two. He described the shake-up as "the most significant structural reform of our NHS in the devolution era".

▼ *Helch's distinctive tag on a bridge in Shoreditch, east London, and, right, inverted at the base of the American Carwash in Shoreditch*

PHOTOGRAPH: MARK CHARNOCK/ALAMY

'A life unlike any other': gallery announces the death of street artist and tagger Helch

Jamie Grierson

The street artist Helch, known for murals and tags across England, has died, the gallery that represented him has said.

Helch rose to prominence in 2018, when he painted his tag in capital letters across a series of public spots in London and on bridges on motorways including the M4, M1 and M25.

The tag was sometimes painted in stylised fonts or different colours, and occasionally appeared as just the letter H.

In 2019 the word "Helch" appeared on a bridge over the M4 to the north of Bristol. In July that year, the words "Boris is …" were painted on one side of the bridge, visible to westbound traffic. They remained for a few weeks before they were painted over by Network Rail. Then the words "Boris is Helch" appeared in the same place.

Posting on Sunday on Instagram, BSMT Space, a gallery for street artists that is based in east London, said: "Receiving news today of the untimely passing of Helch has left us broken hearted. It felt like he stepped into our lives out of the ether." The gallery continued that it was driven to find out more after "a moment of revelation" on seeing "Helch" painted on the American Carwash in Shoreditch.

It added: "It took six months to get him to agree to meet in person, and in 2022 we released his first print, which sold out within the hour.

"A stranger to the gallery world, Helch was a true creature of the night. It's where he found his vocation and the gallery walls were not always what it was about for him. We often had to recalibrate what this meant as we worked together.

"Over the past year, his work progressed exponentially, he was coming into his own as an artist. A true perfectionist, he wouldn't present anything that wasn't to his standard and it was an honour to witness. An urban landscape without an H in it seems unfathomable. A life unlike any other, he was compelled to leave his mark on this world … Rest well H - your rollers have spoken their truth."

The street artist's identity has never been officially revealed - though one media organisation claimed to have named him at the end of last year - and he was reportedly 34 when he died.

> ***'An urban landscape without an H in it seems unfathomable'***
>
> **BSMT Space**
> *East London gallery*

Part of the British urban landscape

You'll know you've made an impact when the headlines on your death are filled with words like "infamous", "world class" and "upset Queen Elizabeth II". By that measure, the street artist Helch made a pretty serious mark on the world.

The graffiti supremo died this week, leaving behind a country pockmarked by his tag. From Bristol to London, Helch was everywhere. He was even on a viaduct on the way to Windsor Castle, "ruining" the view of poor old Elizabeth II's home and apparently leaving our late monarch in an absolute rage.

He was only 34, which almost doesn't make sense. It feels like his work has been around for ever, as much a part of the British urban landscape as red phone boxes and uncollected bins.

Where his predecessors could run rampant on the wastelands that would soon be newbuilds, Helch had to scrap for every inch of graffiti space, to hunt out the final concrete canvases left in England's new steel-and-glass urbanity.

When you see Helch, you're seeing the remains of what the country was before the developers came in and sold it all on. When you see Helch, you're seeing someone lay claim to the city you're in, or the road you're on.

It was a comfort to spot a Helch tag as you made your way through London or down some miserable motorway. It meant that someone had persevered, that individuality had won through against the odds.

He was just some miscreant from Hayes, west London, doing what all great graffiti artists do best: leaving his mark, shaping the city in his own image, and upsetting the poshos in the process. But he leaves behind a towering legacy, one that'll cost the developers a lot to scrub off, and that makes it worth every penny. Eddy Frankel

Member of flag-raising group pleads not guilty to murder

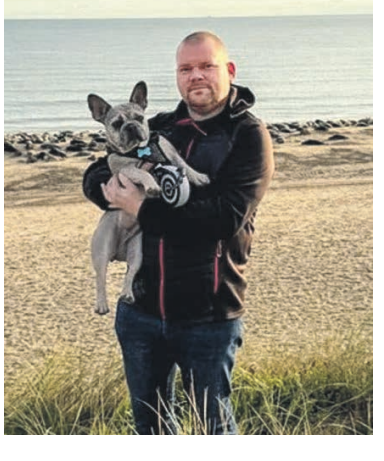
Neha Gohil
Midlands correspondent

A man accused of murdering a businessman outside a bar in Staffordshire has pleaded not guilty.

Billy Allison, 36, a member of the flag-raising group Raise the Colours, appeared at Stafford crown court yesterday and entered not guilty pleas to the murder of Matthew O'Gara and to causing grievous bodily harm with intent to a second person.

Allison, of Shirley in Solihull, West Midlands, appeared via video link from HMP Dovegate.

Officers were called to the Ricco & Loren bar on Market Street in Lichfield at 11.25pm on 24 May after receiving reports two men had been punched, Staffordshire police previously said in a statement.



◀ *Matthew O'Gara died from his injuries after the attack in May*

O'Gara, who was the director of the Plough pub in the nearby village of Huddlesford, sustained serious injuries and died in hospital two days later. The second man also attended hospital and was later discharged.

Officers later arrested Allison and he was charged with murder and grievous bodily harm with intent.

Judge Mukherjee told Allison yesterday that he would stand trial in October and it would probably last for about 10 days. "I have adjourned your case for trial to the 28th of October," he said.

Lichfield rugby club paid tribute to O'Gara after his death, describing him as "a friend of the club and a very generous and valued sponsor".

Its post said: "From everyone at the club we would like to offer our deepest condolences to all of Matt's family, friends, colleagues and the wider Plough family."

The Plough pub closed its doors in the immediate aftermath to give family and staff "the time, privacy and respect they need".

Simon Callow as William Beveridge in the film The Man With the Plan
PHOTOGRAPH: SANDS FILMS PRODUCTION

Callow stars in film celebrating architect of UK welfare state

Richard Norton-Taylor

A new film that addresses issues fundamental to Andy Burnham's declared mission will star Simon Callow as William Beveridge, a Liberal peer who helped to lay the foundations of the postwar welfare state.

Beveridge is the hero of The Man With the Plan, which shows him as a far more radical figure than is usually assumed – and certainly more so than Winston Churchill anticipated when he asked Beveridge to draw up a report into the future of Britain's fragmented social insurance and national health system after the second world war.

Beveridge's report caused a sensation, despite its title, Social Insurance and Allied Services. On the day it was published in 1942, a mile-long queue formed outside the government's stationery office in central London. More than 650,000 copies were sold.

Now The Man With the Plan is about to tour the country – including a viewing on the eve of the Labour party conference in Liverpool. It will be shown mainly in small venues such as libraries and community centres.

The film was written and directed by Christine Edzard, who, with Olivier Stockman, its producer, runs Sands Films Studio in Rotherhithe in London, where it was shot.

Edzard and Stockman's previous films include 1987's Charles Dickens adaptation, Little Dorrit, and a 2001 version of A Midsummer Night's Dream performed by children.

In The Man With the Plan, a young student called Flea, played by newcomer Sophie Jenkin, embarks on an Alice in Wonderland-style journey and comes across Beveridge's "five giants": want, disease, squalor (voiced by Miriam Margolyes), idleness and ignorance.

Participants in the film include the campaigning standup comedian Mark Thomas and Sir Michael Marmot, professor of epidemiology and public health at University College London. Beveridge's words are spoken verbatim by Callow.

Prevention of ill health may begin with health centres, says Beveridge, but it also "spreads into problems of sanitation, housing, nutrition. One of the main efforts should be directed to improving housing – there lies the scope for raising standards of living and improving health and defeating the giant squalor."

Beveridge continues: "A satisfactory scheme of social insurance also assumes the maintenance of employment and the prevention of mass unemployment: the giant idleness."

During her travels, Flea meets fierce opposition to a "living wage", defence spending, the role of the private sector in the NHS, and the privatisation of public utilities. Beveridge's opponents mock his ambition to abolish want, and the need for an economic policy to maintain productive employment.

A narrator reminds viewers: "The state is not some dictator or Google or Amazon – or 'they'. The state is you. You!"

Flea asks Marmot whether he thinks Beveridge's plan could be possible today. He replies: "Not just possible today, but necessary, vital, today. We have to address the causes of the causes – and they reside in those five giants of Beveridge. So we need social action, we need to rediscover the public good."

For many people, this is utopian. But as this film shows, the charge of utopianism should not be used as an excuse for political leaders simply to reject all of Beveridge's ambitious aims, as successive governments have done. Andy Burnham take note.

At Otley Courthouse, West Yorkshire, on 20 September, then touring

Dollyfest will be held next year to honour late singer

Press Association

A festival celebrating the life of Dolly Parton will be held in Nashville and London, the late singer's estate said yesterday.

The two-day Dollyfest will be staged across consecutive weekends to honour the country music star, who died last week after being diagnosed with cancer.

Dollyfest had originally been scheduled for January this year – around the time of the singer's 80th birthday – and was to feature Parton as a performer and host. It will now take place next year and serve as a celebration of her legacy.

"We had the venue booked and we had the announcement ready to go," said Danny Nozell, the founder and chief executive of Parton's longtime management company, CTK Enterprises.

"And then in August 2025 Dolly had to take a step back after her initial health challenges."

Nozell added: "A lot of people always say, WWDD (what would Dolly do?), and, well, at this moment Dollyfest is WDWD (what Dolly would do)."

A spokesperson for Parton's estate said a traditional memorial had not been "something Dolly wanted".

They added: "Instead, it feels more appropriate for us to take a beat, let all the tributes that immediately make sense occur naturally, and then see through this festival-style concept that was truly dreamed up by Dolly.

"This is something that is authentic to her, something that feels right to me, and something that artists and fans around the world can participate in while also giving everyone time to grieve, and giving everyone time to plan."

Performers and dates for Dollyfest have yet to be announced.

Dolly Parton died at the age of 80 last week

'This is something that artists and fans around the world can participate in'

Spokesperson for Dolly Parton's estate

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A rotten business Plans to tackle illegal waste dumps

Pippa Neill
Environment reporter

"There were parents dropping their children off and then heaving from the smell," said Liz Thompson, who runs Blessings Nursery in Bradford, West Yorkshire.

During the summer heatwaves, the smell from an illegal waste dump on Midland Road, just metres from the nursery, became so unbearable that staff had to keep the doors and windows shut and the children couldn't play outside.

The smell lingered for weeks and started to affect Thompson's business, with prospective parents put off from enrolling their children. "It smelled like really bad rotten food," she said.

The situation Thompson faced is far from a one-off. The Environment Agency received 10,238 reports of suspected waste crime in England last year alone.

Yorkshire was a hotspot, with 1,068 reports in 2025, second only to the West Midlands, where 1,542 reports were filed. These figures are probably underestimates, with just 27% of waste crimes thought to be reported.

It's a problem that exercises the public and it's striking that, in one of his first moves as prime minister, Andy Burnham visited the Midland Road dump, declaring that the "days of making easy money out of waste are over".

The site came on to Bradford Council and the Environment Agency's radar in June after reports of foul smells. It had been building for months, with HGVs entering in the dead of night and a large excavator unloading and dumping thousands of tonnes of waste.

"There are really clear signs this is linked to organised criminality," said the Environment Agency's area manager, Ben Hocking. Waste crime is profitable for criminals but costly for the public; about 20% of the waste in circulation in England is managed illegally, at a cost to the economy of about £1bn a year.

Burnham has already earmarked three illegal sites where waste needs to be removed: Power Station Road on the Isle of Sheppey, Kent; Aymer Close in Runnymede, Surrey; and Midland Road.

Hocking estimates the cost to the taxpayer of cleaning up the Bradford site alone will be upwards of a quarter of a million pounds. The cost of cleaning up the Hoads Wood illegal waste dump in Kent, where more than 30,000 tonnes of household and construction waste were removed, came to £15m.

The illegal waste dump on Midland Road near Bradford City's football ground

PHOTOGRAPH: SCOUT HEPPELL/REUTERS

"The aim is to recuperate the costs through the courts, but whether that will be possible for this site remains uncertain," said Hocking. Criminal investigations are ongoing.

As part of Burnham's plans to tackle waste crime, Tracy Brabin, the mayor of West Yorkshire, will be appointed to take a region-led approach. Angela Eagle, the environment secretary, said: "We are cracking down on the criminals behind it and giving the Environment Agency the tools it needs to go further and faster."

But just how well equipped mayoral authorities and the Environment Agency are to tackle organised criminality on this scale remains up for debate, with the House of Lords recently accusing the agency of "incompetence" when it comes to waste crime.

"We could always do with more funding," said Hocking, "but we're also looking to be more effective with the people that we have. We are really looking to get a better intelligence picture of what's happening and where."

Mundane is magical Spirits hide inside new artworks

Alice Fisher

Woo Jin Joo's studio is full of magic. Ceramic green goblin feet line the windowsill, disembodied furry legs jut out of one white wall and, on the table behind where the Korean-Chinese artist sits drinking tea, a headless being dressed in a black coat squats, arms aloft in warning.

There are also neat racks of colourful thread next to a freehand embroidery machine, the source of this supernatural horde. This is where Joo creates much of her art – surface embroideries and sculptural 3D creatures inspired by Korean myth, philosophy and the relationship between humans and the natural world.

"When I use the embroidery machine I feel like I'm painting," she says. "It's as if each thread has its own life."

Joo was born and raised in Korea, mainly by her grandmother, before moving to the UK 12 years ago to study at Central Saint Martins and then the Royal Academy in London. Swapping east Asia for west Europe started her thinking about how she was shaped by culture and the world around her. "That transition made me want to explore who I am and how I see things."

In 2021 she worked out how she wanted to go about it. She embroidered the 10 Taoist symbols of longevity, typically used to wish someone long life, on to an Ikea bag – a plastic product that could take up to 1,000 years to decompose.

"It was that work that made me feel a connection, a way of drawing ideas together to make a transformation that resonated with religious beliefs as well as myth."

I Hear Things Existing With Me by the Korean-Chinese artist Woo Jin Joo. Above, Tireless. Below, Hat Dokkaebi. Joo is influenced by folklore and shamanism: 'I love the idea that the small and mundane have spirit'

PHOTOGRAPHS: ROBERT CHADWICK/ WOO JIN JOO

Guided by the idea from Korean folklore and shamanism that inanimate objects could become spirited beings called dokkaebi, she looked at the junk discarded in London with fresh eyes. Now she often uses found objects in her work – a creature with many feet peers out of an old shirt sleeve; a discarded wooden side-table now sprouts a 5ft-tall dokkaebi leg. "I love the idea that the small and mundane have spirit," she says. "We need to realise that the ordinary is special."

Joo is part of a new wave of creatives showing that traditional, sometimes archaic, craft can be used to make very modern, joyful work. Makers are not just keeping these skills alive but evolving how they can be used. "Craft is no longer just about material knowledge, but about experimenting and playfulness. This means more people are drawn to it," says Joo.

Joo loves the interest in Korean culture – currently encompassing everything from pop to skincare – and it is perhaps one of the reasons her work feels so current. "Because I'm from Chinese as well as Korean heritage it's been very meaningful to see both cultures celebrated. I think that international attention has meant that, especially within Korea, there's now more interest in preserving and honouring traditions."

With another show to prepare for, at the Harley Foundation, Nottinghamshire, later this year, Joo has long hours ahead of her in the studio creating her magical creatures, but she relishes that. "I think it's the trickle of everydayness that really shapes who I am and how I see things. That really is what my work is about."

Bodily Inbetweenness is at Ruup & Form, London, from 11 September to 13 November. Shoreditch Design Week, London, is 15-20 September

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‘Alarm bells rang’

Parents tell of ordeal after son’s Send school shut amid abuse claims

Jessica Murray
Social affairs correspondent

Annette and Kevin Maxwell were nervous about sending their son Jonah to a residential home for children with special educational needs and disabilities (Send). Jonah has severe autism – he is non-verbal, has epilepsy and behavioural problems, and needs round-the-clock care.

Annette said: “It was a huge decision, but we almost had no choice because with Jonah at home, you can’t work and we had two other children to think about. He’s beautiful, but he is very, very complicated. Outsourcing parenting is just foreign to us and it’s horrible, but we didn’t have another option.”

When he first arrived at St Christopher’s in Bristol, Jonah was thriving, receiving different therapies and doing activities such as horse riding. Then, in 2016, the charity that ran the home collapsed and the centre was acquired by the Aurora Group, which runs more than 30 Send schools and is owned by Octopus, an investment management and property company.

The Maxwells, who live in Bath, noticed a change almost immediately. They said the food quality went downhill, there were plans – later suspended – for an overnight nursing position to be cut, and they began to have concerns about Jonah’s wellbeing. Whenever he came home to visit he seemed very tired.

“Alarm bells were going off,” said Annette. “But every time we spoke to management and staff, they would always reassure us that everything was OK.”

At this point, the Aurora Group was being paid £292,000 a year by their local authority to care for Jonah. The company was expanding rapidly by acquiring several established providers to become one of the UK’s largest specialist education and care operators.

Then, in 2019, it was announced that St Christopher’s was being closed down by Ofsted after serious allegations of child cruelty came to light. Vulnerable children had to move out at short notice, their belongings packed into black bin bags. They were sent across the country to new placements.

The police began an investigation into alleged child cruelty and safeguarding concerns but this concluded after two years without any criminal charges being brought.

The Maxwells were told by police there had been allegations involving Jonah. In one incident, he was said to have been roughly grabbed and shoved into his room by a staff member. They also found out a carer had allegedly been waking him up every two hours through the night to go to the toilet to avoid having to clean soiled sheets, which police said could be classified as child cruelty.

Annette said: “I just wish I’d been more pushy at the time and tried harder to get to the bottom of things. I really, really regret that I didn’t do more.”

Police later confirmed they were unable to interview the directors of the Aurora Group, who parents believed had questions to answer over cost-cutting that may have contributed to alleged abuse. Child cruelty legislation applies only to those who directly commit an alleged offence.

St Christopher’s was classified as a school, not a care provider, meaning it could not be investigated under legislation that might implicate both a corporation and individuals.

Kevin said: “Our kids have become a moneymaking tool for these companies, and they squeeze it, because they know that, ultimately, they can walk away. There has to be better accountability.”

The couple pursued civil action against Aurora, alleging a breach of Jonah’s human rights. The company agreed to pay £18,600 without admission of any guilt.

The Maxwells are pushing for stricter laws to ensure private Send providers face the same levels of accountability and transparency as other schools.

As part of sweeping Send reforms announced this year, the government promised to “crack down” on private companies running schools, imposing fee caps and minimum standards.

◀ *Annette and Kevin Maxwell from Bath, whose son Jonah, below, has severe autism and requires round-the-clock care*

PHOTOGRAPH: ADRIAN SHERRATT/ THE GUARDIAN

Those in the sector said they had been raising the alarm for years and urged the government to create more state schools in the Send sector to wrest back control from private companies, which charge significantly more.

Darren Northcott, the national officer for education at the NASUWT teaching union, said: “There is a big problem where public money, which should be being spent on children, young people and the staff working with them, is leaking out of the system in the form of profits and surpluses. That’s not acceptable.”

He said many Send schools, in the state and private sectors, had become incredibly challenging places to work because of a lack of staffing or resources to deal with children with complex needs. He said staff were increasingly expected to accept violence from children as “part of the job” and in some cases “the level of care and investment in staff falls short of what would reasonably be expected”.

Hayley Harding of the Let Us Learn Too campaign said many parents were frustrated by the lack of Send places in state schools, leaving private providers as the only option for many. “There’s a huge issue with local authority capacity and lack of planning – for so many years they have been firefighting, rather than actually planning for how many children need this,” she said. “Nobody wants people making profit out of our children. But we want them to be educated, and that’s often the only option available.”

A spokesperson for the Aurora Group said it was the only B Corp accredited provider in the sector. B Corp certification is a private credential for for-profit companies that prove high social and environmental standards through independent evaluation. Aurora also said 96% of its services were rated by Ofsted as good or outstanding.

The spokesperson added: “St Christopher’s was in serious difficulties under different ownership and under close Ofsted scrutiny when we responded to a campaign to keep the school open. We invested substantially in improving staffing, facilities and overall provision.

“We regret that we were ultimately unable to overcome the school’s challenges, and we remain saddened by the circumstances surrounding its eventual closure in 2019. We did all that we could at the time to support the Maxwell family and wish them well.”

The spokesperson said all the group’s profits were reinvested in establishing new schools in partnership with local authorities, bringing “relief to families and making it far easier for children to go to school nearer to home”.

> *‘Our kids have become a money-making tool for these companies, and they squeeze it’*
>
> **Kevin Maxwell**

Wendell Berry, lauded US novelist, poet and nature writer, dies at 92

Associated Press

Wendell Berry, the Kentucky-born author whose poems, stories, novels and essays celebrated the farming communities of his native state and warned of the excesses and misjudgments of an industrial, commercialised society, has died aged 92.

His daughter, Mary Berry, confirmed on Monday that he died in his home in Port Royal, Kentucky. "There's not enough I could say about him to do him justice," she told Associated Press.

Berry was a prolific writer who published more than 40 books, including the novels Nathan Coulter and A Place on Earth, the short story collection Stand By Me and the poetry anthology A Timbered Choir.

His legacy extended well beyond Kentucky: Michael Pollan, the author of bestsellers including The Omnivore's Dilemma, said his life was changed by Berry's declaration that "eating is an agricultural act". The chef and food activist Alice Waters cited him as a favourite author and wrote an introduction to Berry's 1989 essay The Pleasures of Eating.

Few authors were more tied to their home than Berry, an intellectual and spiritual heir to Henry David Thoreau. In prose and poetry, Berry challenged modern assumptions about prosperity and happiness and renewed the mysteries of birth, love, work and death.

He was born and raised in a farming town during the Great Depression and watched its seemingly immortal ties unravel by his teens.

In his 2006 novel, Andy Catlett: Early Travels, he wrote: "Increasingly over the last maybe 40 years, the thought has come to me that the old world in which our people lived by the work of their hands, close to weather and earth, plants and animals, was the true world and that the new world of cheap energy and ever cheaper money, honoured greed, and dreams of liberation from every restraint, is mostly theatre.

▲ *Wendell Berry at his home in Port Royal, Kentucky, in 2011, the year he joined a protest against strip-mining*

PHOTOGRAPH: ED REINKE/AP

"The world I knew as a boy was flawed, surely, but it was substantial and authentic. The households of my grandparents seemed to breathe forth a sense of the real cost and worth of things. Whatever came, came by somebody's work."

Born in 1934, Berry grew up in New Castle, Kentucky, where his father practised law and all the family worked on his grandfather's farm.

As a teenager he went to the University of Kentucky. By his early 20s, he was publishing poems and stories. He received a writing fellowship from Stanford University in 1958 and stayed on another year as a visiting lecturer. He also lived in New York in the early 1960s, but soon bought a farm in Kentucky and settled there.

> ***'As I go in under the trees, dependably, almost at once ... things fall into place'***
>
> **Wendell Berry**
> *US author*

Berry and his wife lived without computers, television or phones, but did install solar units in 2005, an act of defiance in a state powered by coal. He cut ties with the University of Kentucky after the school accepted $7m for a new basketball dormitory from a group of donors organised by a coal company president. In 2011, he joined a sit-in at the governor's office in protest at strip-mining.

He was among the most prominent authors never to receive a Pulitzer prize or a National Book Award, though his honours included a National Humanities Medal, membership in the American Academy of Arts and Letters and a lifetime achievement award from the National Book Critics Circle.

He once wrote: "And so I go into the woods. As I go in under the trees, dependably, almost at once, and by nothing I do, things fall into place. I enter an order that does not exist outside, in the human spaces. I feel my life take its place among the lives - the trees, the annual plants, the animals and birds, the living of all these and the dead - that go and have gone to make the life of the earth."

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Business rates Court closes avoidance loophole for landlords of empty offices

Nick Sommerlad

From the outside the seven-storey building at 2 America Square looks like any other office block in the heart of London's financial district. Being located about half a mile from Tower Bridge, one might expect it to be a hive of commercial activity, teeming with employees holding important meetings. However, much of the property is home not to staff competing for their next bonus but to stacks of nondescript black boxes arranged in neat lines.

The building, leased by a Virgin Islands-based company called 48th Street Holdings Ltd, has found itself at the centre of a court case that has finally signalled the end of a tax avoidance scheme believed to have cost local authorities more than £1bn. For almost two decades, companies in England have been exploiting a legal loophole to avoid paying business rates on unoccupied commercial buildings.

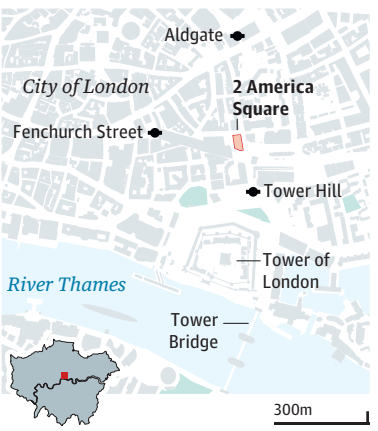
The controversial practice dates back to 2008, when the last Labour government changed business rates rules. This meant occupiers of vacant buildings no longer qualified for a 50% discount on the levy. However, they were entitled to claim a three-month rate holiday at the end of each tenancy - and the "box shifting" scheme was born.

With commercial property owners facing higher bills, a lucrative "rate mitigation" industry emerged. Historically, this typically involved boxes being moved into the empty space at the end of the three months and back out after just six weeks. The building then became unoccupied again and the clock was reset, allowing the owner to claim another three-month rate-free period.

This cycle continued, designed to cut the rates owed by up to 67%, until a new long-term tenant could be found. It has cost one London council an estimated £35m a year since the pandemic, when the number of claims for empty property relief doubled.

However, last month a ruling by three court of appeal judges looked to have sounded the death knell for box shifting. They ruled that the scheme "cannot amount to beneficial occupation". The case was brought by the City of London Corporation against 48th Street Holding Ltd and a second company, Principled Offsite Logistics Ltd (Poll), which provides "rate mitigation" services.

48th Street paid £27.6m for a lease on the office block in 2019 before it brought in Poll to save £111,475.30 in rates across a series of three-month periods in 2022 and 2023.



▼ *'Box shifting' involves placing and removing items in empty offices to trigger periods of rates relief. Top, 2 America Square in London*

PHOTOGRAPHS: CITY OF LONDON CORP; ALAMY

Poll describes itself as "the largest and most reliable" provider of "empty business rates mitigation" in the UK and is jointly owned by a Labour councillor from North Hertfordshire. It claimed by 2021 to have already saved its clients £500m in rates and that "every council in the UK now totally recognises Principled as being robust in every way".

That bold claim followed a high court win in 2018 when Poll defeated a challenge from Trafford council. The judge in that case accepted that "the purpose of the occupation is not to store goods; it is, so to speak, to plant the occupier's flag" and that "the motive ... is rates avoidance for the landlord", but added "the morality of that is neither here nor there".

When the case against Poll and 48th Street came before the high court last year, Charles Bagot KC, sitting as a deputy high court judge, also ruled against the City of London. "I agree with Poll that if legislation produces clear tramlines and someone organises themselves to fall within them, then it is not for the court to get involved in moral judgments," he said. "If the government does not like the position, it can amend it." He concluded that "the RMS [rate mitigation scheme] is effective".

However, last month the court of appeal overturned that decision, with Lady Justice Falk ruling: "In my judgment, 'occupation' for, in effect, the sake of it, and which has no use, value or benefit other than rate saving, does not amount to occupation for the purpose of the statutory scheme."

A City of London Corporation spokesperson said: "We welcome the court of appeal's decision, which represents a significant victory for local authorities across England. This landmark ruling closes one of the most widely used tax avoidance schemes in the country and helps safeguard revenues that support essential public services. We are proud that the City of London has led the way nationally in pursuing this case.

"For more than a decade, councils across the country have seen hundreds of millions of pounds of public revenue lost through artificial business rates avoidance schemes and we believe the decision restores fairness, protects money that funds vital local services, and provides greater certainty for councils, ratepayers and property owners alike."

A government spokesperson said: "We recognise concerns about the misuse of empty property relief, which exists to support genuine property owners between tenants.

"Business rates avoidance is unacceptable and we are taking the necessary action to address this, and make sure that businesses are paying the tax they owe."

It is unclear what action the government is planning, but there are calls for a general anti-avoidance rule to control the rate mitigation industry.

Poll is not the only business offering box shifting. The same scheme was even used by Public Health England at its future headquarters in Harlow, Essex, in 2018. The resulting £2.5m dispute with Harlow district council ended up in the high court, where PHE won.

It remains to be seen how councils and their rate mitigation opponents will respond.

One rating expert said that the total cost to councils of box shifting could have topped £1.5bn, and some of that money should now be reclaimed as a deterrent.

Under the terms of Poll's contracts with clients, its success fees are refundable in the event the scheme fails. The latest accounts show it has just over £500,000 in net assets. Poll did not respond to a request for comment and its website went down this week, replaced with a message reading: "This account has been suspended."

The company's founder, Steven Dawson, died in 2024 and Poll was acquired in a management buyout by two of its executives. One of them is a Labour councillor, Sarah Lucas, who, according to her LinkedIn profile, has been Poll's director of finance since 2018.

Lucas was elected to North Hertfordshire council in 2024, two months after she took 50% ownership of Poll, and she serves as vice-chair of the council's finance, audit and risk committee.

The Guardian understands that Poll's application for permission to appeal to the supreme court was refused by the court of appeal this week but an option remains for it to apply to the supreme court directly.

The rules on empty property relief changed in 2024 and buildings now need to be occupied for 13 weeks instead of six in order for the three-month holiday to apply. According to one recent judgment, this makes box shifting schemes "less attractive but still effective".

There are still a range of variants of rates mitigation on offer. One involves placing Bluetooth boxes in offices to broadcast adverts. Another uses charitable exhibitions to claim not only empty property relief but also the extra rates relief available for charities. Some schemes install snail or mushroom farms to claim agricultural reliefs, while others involve opening faith rooms to cut rates.

£1.5bn

Possible total cost of the practice of box shifting to councils in England, according to one rates expert

50%

Rates discount on vacant buildings till 2008, when a three-month break was allowed at the end of tenancies

Reds ahead

They range in age and hail from a variety of backgrounds and ethnicities, but these Americans who sat for Kieran Dodds all have one thing in common – their eye-catching red hair. The Scottish photographer spent the past two years interviewing and photographing hundreds of people across the US for his latest book, Gingers of America, asking the same question at the end of each encounter: "What unites the States?" Dodds added: "Although almost everyone featured in the project is ginger, it is not really about hair. It is structured around themes raised time and again in the conversations I had with portrait sitters, and which I reflected on during my travels in the States."

World

Moscow targets railway network with Kyiv strikes killing six workers

A train destroyed by Russian shelling earlier this year in a depot in the Donetsk region. Since Russia's full-scale invasion, 58 railway staff have been killed and more than 300 injured

PHOTOGRAPH: JELLE KRINGS

Luke Harding
Dan Sabbagh *Kyiv*

Russia has launched a deadly new phase in its war against Ukraine by deliberately targeting the country's railway network, with six employees killed yesterday in the latest strikes on Kyiv.

Ukraine's state-owned railway company, Ukrzaliznytsia, said its workers died when a ballistic missile plunged into a locomotive depot. The Russians hit other railway facilities, it added, during a massive bombardment of Kyiv and the Kyiv region. At least 12 people died and a dozen were wounded, including three children.

Oleksandr Pertsovsky, Ukrzaliznytsia's chairman, said: "An unbearably difficult night for the entire railway family. Railway staff have been working at the scene since early this morning. The attack has caused significant damage. Rescue workers are still putting out a number of fires."

The grim strike took place as Russia escalates its attacks on the Ukrainian capital. It has carried out continuous raids for six days, beginning last week, in an attempt to disrupt daily life and to demoralise the city's inhabitants. The onslaught took place hours before Ukrainian children began a new school year.

Since Russia's full-scale invasion, 58 railway staff have been killed and at least 318 injured. One wounded railway employee, Volodymyr, was taken to hospital yesterday, with people urged to donate blood if they were B positive. "Our colleagues are by his side," Ukrzaliznytsia said, adding it would support victims' families.

The railway network is Europe's third largest with 15,000 miles (24,000km) of track. It has been a lifeline for the country's wartime civilians, transporting 4 million people and an estimated 120,000 pets. It has brought world leaders to Kyiv, including Joe Biden and Andy Burnham, who arrived last week on an overnight service from Poland.

Serhii Leshchenko, a member of Ukrzaliznytsia's supervisory board, described the railway as the "backbone of Ukraine's economy". It was the main logistical supplier for the country's army, and for its industry, and every week transported 600,000 people, he said. With 170,000 workers, it was also its biggest company.

For these reasons Russia was trying to destroy railways, he added. In the first year of the war it attacked bridges, which could be easily replaced. Next, it targeted rails and electricity substations. Ukraine then switched to using diesel engines. This year, it started "direct attacks on civilian locomotives," he said – an insidious tactic, at a time when Ukraine is short of air defences.

Several drivers have been killed and locomotives targeted inside depots. Leshchenko said that if a Shahed drone comes within 50kms of a train, it has to be evacuated, and can only continue once the threat has passed. So far this year Russia has hit the network more than 1,500 times – a higher figure than the whole of 2025. Overall, 249 carriages and 492 locomotives have been damaged.

Once known for punctuality, trains now suffer regular delays, sometimes for as long as 12 to 15 hours. Amid air raid sirens, passengers are forced to disembark and take cover, including during winter. Writing on Facebook, the Ukrainian journalist Tetiana Zaiets described how she hid in April when Russian drones flew overhead.

"It was hell," she posted. "The train stopped at night somewhere in central Ukraine. I don't even know the name of the town. Half asleep, I just heard the conductor say: 'Evacuation.' We took only our personal belongings and valuables with us. It was raining outside. Thank you to the conductors for handing out blankets."

She went on to describe how the passengers sheltered under a goods wagon for two hours with drones overhead, adding: "The last carriage in the train was full of children. They were being taken back from hospital. They were crying in their sleep. I thought I'd ended up in some sort of horror film. But no, this is our life."

Since the incident Zaiets said she had been too frightened to travel by train. "Until the war is over, I won't be using it," she said, though she stressed that she respected Ukraine's "courageous" railway workers.

Last week an enemy drone hit a train in the Odesa region with 600 people onboard, including 15 children. One passenger, Andriy, told the website Suspline: "The train was stopped, we were kicked out. We heard explosions, everything was burning. It was scary."

Leshchenko admitted the Russian strikes were hurting Ukraine's economy and had slowed the export of grain from its beleaguered Black Sea ports. He said Kyiv needed air defences from western partners, so it could protect its trains from marauding missiles and drones. "If the whole country is under attack they will attack railways for sure," he said.

Until this year more than 90% of Ukrainian trains arrived on time. This was in part because they never go very fast, rolling at 55mph. Carriages are clean and comfortable, making rail the best way of getting around a vast country. Stewards look after night train travellers and bring morning tea in filigree holders. There is a trolley on day trains, and patchy wifi.

On international services, border guards scrutinise male passengers, while dogs roam corridors. Since the invasion, men between 18 and 60 have been forbidden from leaving the country, with some exemptions. On trains from Kyiv to Przemyśl, a railway hub in eastern Poland, most travellers are women. Since 2022 about 6 million people have departed abroad, many exiting by train.

In recent days Russia has launched more than 1,500 drones at Ukraine, 800 of them jet-fuel models, which are harder to shoot down. In the past, Moscow would send a swarm of drones a couple of times a week, usually at night. Now the attacks continue without a pause, with one or two drones every hour, paralysing ordinary life. Air raid sirens in Kyiv are non-stop.

Pertsovsky described the loss of his employees as "terrible". He wrote: "We are in touch with their loved ones. Everyone is with them to get through this extremely difficult time. The night is bitter with impossibility."

600,000

Number of people carried by Ukrzaliznytsia every week. The network has 15,000 miles of track

Brazilian elections
US meddling evokes memories of the 60s
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Kākāpō boom
Population of world's heaviest parrot rises
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PHOTOGRAPHS: ESSENTIAL FILMPRODUKTION, KINO PRODUZIONI, SOCIÉTÉ PARISIENNE DE PRODUCTION, STUDIO ULJANA KIM, AAMOD

▲ *Sergei Loznitsa's documentary Imperium, which uses archival footage filmed in the former Soviet Union in the 1970s. Loznitsa likened the European Commission's decision to cut funds for the Venice Biennale over the opening of the Russian pavilion to 'a punishment in kindergarten'*

Biennale

Ukrainian film-maker decries EU hypocrisy over Russia

Philip Oltermann
European culture editor

One of Ukraine's most acclaimed film-makers has criticised the European Commission's decision to cut off funds to the Venice Biennale over the opening of Russia's pavilion, likening it to "a punishment in kindergarten".

The Biennale drew heavy criticism this spring when it allowed Russia to use its pavilion for the first time since 2022, despite the continuing full-scale invasion of Ukraine.

Speaking on the eve of the Biennale's cinematic branch, the Venice film festival, the director Sergei Loznitsa said that while he would "never ever" personally visit the Russian pavilion, the row was a distraction from the EU's failure to enforce more effective economic sanctions against Moscow.

"The question I ask myself is this: can the existence of this Russian pavilion stop this war or not?" said Loznitsa, who won wide acclaim for his 2014 documentary Maidan and last year's Soviet-set drama Two Prosecutors, and is showing his new film Imperium out of competition on the Lido this year.

He added: "What I do know is that in the second quarter of this year, European companies imported gas from Russia at unprecedented levels, and all that money goes straight into bombs that fall on Ukraine."

According to the EU's Agency for the Cooperation of Energy Regulators, European imports of Russian liquefied natural gas increased by 17% compared with the same period in 2025, before a full EU-wide ban on Russian LNG from 2027.

Loznitsa said: "This is a much more serious issue than whether there is a Russian pavilion in Venice or not. Cutting off funding to the Biennale is like a punishment in kindergarten."

While the Russian pavilion's exhibition The Tree is Rooted in the Sky was only accessible during the pre-opening *vernissage* dates and has been closed to the public since 9 May, the European Commission confirmed last month that it was terminating its €2m (£1.7m) multiyear grant to the Biennale Foundation.

The row is now also threatening to engulf the Venice film festival, which has a degree of institutional independence from the Biennale but will be affected by the cut.

The Biennale's management said the grant used to co-finance the activities of the cinema department relating to Biennale College and the Venice Production Bridge affects "activities and a department that have nothing to do with Russia's participation in the Biennale Arte".

In a confrontational speech before the announcement of this year's lineup, the Biennale's president, Pietrangelo Buttafuoco, accused the commission of "abandoning our journey". The Biennale, he said, was not engaged in politics but "international research in the field of arts".

For a festival that has often seemed more focused on attracting celebrity glitz than its competitors in Cannes and Berlin, this year's programme is noteworthy for its political flavour and thematic focus on Russia and the countries in its sphere of influence.

As well as Loznitsa's Imperium, there is the French director Alexandre Smia's geopolitical "disaster movie" Jupiter, in which the Russian president has survived an assassination attempt for which he blames Ukraine and seeks retribution.

Andrei Kutsila's animated documentary Letters from the Silenced Country focuses on political repression in Belarus, while the Russian-born American film-maker Julia Loktev's five-hour documentary My Undesirable Friends: Part II – Exile follows a group of Russian dissident journalists working for the independent television channel TV Rain after they are forced to flee their country in the wake of the full-scale invasion.

Loktev's film circles around the question of where art and journalism stops and propaganda begins. "It's a film about when your country does terrible things, how to take accountability," said Loktev. "How do you speak as a citizen of your country about the awful actions and the crimes your country is committing?"

The inclusion of another Russian-themed film project, Ilya Khrzhanovsky's Dau, has brought criticism from Ukraine. The Ukrainian ministry of foreign affairs raised "profound concern" over Khrzhanovsky's film, which tells the story of the Soviet physicist who reluctantly contributed to the creation of the first atomic bomb.

It said the multi-film Dau project, once called a "Stalinist Truman Show", has received funding from the Russian businessman Sergey Adonyev, who has been placed under sanctions by the US and Ukraine, and that its Greek-born protagonist Teodor Currentzis accepted Russian citizenship granted by Vladimir Putin.

But in a social media post, the Venice film festival's artistic director, Alberto Barbera, rejected the description of Dau, which was principally shot from 2008 to 2011, as a "Kremlin-financed project". "It is not pro-Putin propaganda," he said. "It is a film that denounces totalitarian regimes and their intrusion into citizens' lives."

Loznitsa's own submission to the festival applies a strongly critical lens to the internal contradictions of Russian imperialism and blindspots in how the Soviet Union used to be seen from the west – specifically from Italy.

The three-hour film is solely based on archival footage shot by a group of Italian film-makers who, thanks to the blessing of the Italian Communist party, were allowed to make three trips to the Soviet Union between 1970 and 1973.

With filming strictly supervised by KGB handlers, the footage they amassed was meant to project the unity of the Soviet empire. Yet the further the crew travels into the outer reaches of the Soviet Union, the more ambiguous the images become. Local customs, from throat singing to reindeer racing to village wrestling competitions, emphasise the disparity rather than the unity of Soviet culture.

"I wanted to show that the Soviet Union collapsed not just for economic reasons, but also because it was impossible to keep so many different cultures under one roof," said Loznitsa.

Moscow's propaganda arm – still detected by many in the cultural policies of the Russian state today – appears largely ineffective in Loznitsa's film. In one scene, the camera hovers over a small tractor parading portraits of members of the politburo through a muddy and forlorn landscape in Dagestan.

"It's a bit like the Russian pavilion in Venice now," the film-maker said. "As propaganda, it's just so ridiculous."

'I do know that in the second quarter of this year, European companies imported gas from Russia at unprecedented levels'

Sergei Loznitsa
Film-maker

‘Strengthening US dominance’

Echoes of cold war as Trump accused of election meddling

Tom Phillips
Rio de Janeiro

The year was 1962 and the Kennedy administration was desperate to swing Brazil’s congressional elections against its leftwing president, João Goulart, as a way of countering the supposed communist threat sweeping a region the US considered its back yard.

Historians say that in the lead-up to the vote, the CIA and the Department of State secretly channelled millions of dollars to opposition candidates and a group tasked with spreading rightwing propaganda and stirring up unrest.

“There was a very heavy-handed intervention here by the US government,” said Chico Rubens Paiva, a political activist whose congressman grandfather Rubens Paiva investigated US meddling during a 1963 parliamentary inquiry into the conspiracy.

More than 60 years later, Paiva, whose grandfather was murdered by the US-backed dictatorship that seized power in 1964, is among those who fear history is repeating itself on the eve of Brazil’s 2026 presidential election.

Next month’s vote will pit the leftwing incumbent, Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva, against the far-right senator Flávio Bolsonaro. The latter is the son of the former president Jair Bolsonaro, a Donald Trump ally who is serving a 27-year sentence for plotting a military coup.

Polls suggest a tight race, and Trump and his secretary of state, Marco Rubio, have been accused of trying to tip the scales in Bolsonaro’s favour by launching an overt campaign of economic and diplomatic pressure against Lula.

This has included imposing 25% tariffs on most Brazilian imports and designating its biggest crime groups – Rio’s Red Command and São Paulo’s First Capital Command – as foreign terrorist organisations. Brazilian officials suspect this is partly designed to boost Bolsonaro by making Lula look soft on crime.

In July, Lula said two Trump officials had been denied entry visas because they planned “to meddle in Brazil’s elections”. Officials believe the pair, who reportedly planned to meet Flávio Bolsonaro, intended to sow doubt about the reliability of Brazil’s internationally respected voting system – something the Bolsonaros have sought to do repeatedly. Soon after, the visa of Brazil’s ambassador to the US was revoked.

▲ *Rubens Paiva, left, investigated meddling in the 1962 election and was later killed by the US-backed dictatorship* PHOTOGRAPH: FAMILY HANDOUT

> ***‘The greatest superpower in history is explicitly backing a candidate in our election and strangling the economy to help him’***
>
> **Celso Rocha de Barros**
> *Political scientist*

Celso Rocha de Barros, a political scientist, voiced bewilderment that US interference – which he said was the election’s most urgent theme – was not getting more coverage in mainstream media. “The greatest superpower in human history is explicitly backing a candidate in our election and is strangling the Brazilian economy in order to help him [win],” Barros said. “We cannot pretend that this isn’t happening … the Brazilian economy is under attack.”

Trump’s tactics have echoes of Washington’s cold war-era attempt to manipulate Brazilian politics before the 1964 coup, which ushered in two decades of authoritarian rule during which hundreds of people were killed or disappeared.

Back then the CIA helped to finance the Brazilian Institute for Democratic Action, which, according to the historians Lilia Schwarcz and Heloisa Starling, illegally poured money into the campaigns of hundreds of lawmakers and eight gubernatorial candidates. “The objective was strategic: to create a strong opposition in congress, block government initiatives and prepare the way for a coup d’état,” the duo argued in their book Brazil: A Biography.

Another US-funded group, the Research and Social Studies Institute, was used to disrupt Goulart’s government by bankrolling anti-communist propaganda and anti-government protests. James N Green, a Brown University historian, said: “The intention [was] getting rid of Goulart [and] opening the door to the military coming to power.”

Green sees parallels between Trump’s use of tariffs to sabotage Lula’s campaign and how, in the early 1960s, Washington sought to enfeeble Goulart’s government by funding his opponents and cutting off loans. Then, as now, the US government was “bent on doing everything possible to weaken the government” in Brazil.

Barros said there was one main difference between the two US campaigns. “[The 1962 campaign] was done covertly, precisely because the CIA knew there would be real public anger in Brazil if people knew the US was bankrolling candidates. So they did it secretly. Today, this is being done openly – and on an incomparably larger scale.”

The Department of State rejected claims the US was seeking to meddle. “Any insinuation of a ‘ploy’ to undermine a democratic nation’s election is a baseless lie,” an official said. “We respect the Brazilian people and whatever government that they choose freely through free and fair elections in Brazil. We have respected and dealt with governments from both sides of the spectrum in Brazil.”

▲ *Flávio Bolsonaro and, top, his father, Jair Bolsonaro, with Marco Rubio, the US secretary of state*

Green believes two objectives lie behind the campaign being waged by Trump and Rubio, the son of Cuban immigrants, who has made toppling Cuba’s communist government a personal project.

First, it is designed to weaken Lula’s government, making it harder for Brazil, Latin America’s largest democracy, to challenge the US economic asphyxiation campaign against Cuba.

Second, it is about “neutralising” leftwing forces in Latin America and boosting the right in the hope of helping to elect even more Trump-aligned leaders. Since 2023 a succession of radical rightwing populists have won power in Argentina, Chile, Costa Rica and Colombia. In reference to Trump’s complexion, this has been nicknamed Latin America’s “orange wave”.

Paiva believes US interference is intended to have a similar effect to the abduction of Venezuela’s dictator, Nicolás Maduro – strengthening “American dominance” in a region it considers a US sphere of influence.

Maduro’s removal in January allowed the US to impose a pliant successor, his vice-president, Delcy Rodríguez, who has started opening up the country to US oil and mining companies. Paiva believes Bolsonaro’s election will “serve the same purpose: putting people into power who will serve their interests”.

He fears that as election day nears, US social media companies could enter the fray, potentially giving Bolsonaro another lift. “Any kind of change to the algorithm has a brutal impact in the way information reaches people,” said Paiva, who is running for a seat in congress for the centre-left Brazilian Socialist party.

Barros believes the campaign’s real driving force is not Trump but Rubio, who hopes to bolster a possible 2028 presidential run by showing voters he has “delivered the whole of Latin America to American interests”.

“This is an election between Lula and Marco Rubio,” Barros said.

▶ *Brazil’s president, Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva, centre, faces the far-right Bolsonaro in next month’s elections* PHOTOGRAPH: XINHUA/SHUTTERSTOCK

Secret to a no-egg tortilla revealed in Spanish wartime cookbook

Stephen Burgen
Barcelona

Few dishes are simpler to prepare than Spain's signature dish of *tortilla de patatas*, which, aside from disputes about onions, requires nothing more than two basic ingredients and a pinch of salt. But where to begin if you have neither eggs nor potatoes?

That is the question the chef and food writer Berta Álvarez Acal sets out to answer in Recetas de Guerra (Wartime Recipes), a compilation of recipes covering the years of hunger after the end of the Spanish civil war in 1939.

In the case of *tortilla de patatas*, the absent eggs and potatoes were substituted by moistened bread and onion to try to simulate the texture of an omelette.

Álvarez said: "There was a formula using water, bicarbonate of soda and a bit of oil which simulated an egg perfectly and the potatoes are substituted by bread to make a tortilla that really is delicious."

In the recipe for "fried squid without squid", deep-fried onion rings masquerade as squid while the "wartime hake" is instead salt cod.

As for the "wartime and postwar breakfast", this consists of "coffee" made from a blend of barley, malt and chicory.

"I got the idea for the book when I came across one of my great-aunt's handwritten recipe books and I noticed that some of the recipes were marked 'wartime'," Álvarez said.

"That led me to research recipes from other sources such as Ignacio Doménech, who wrote a book during the war about how to substitute ingredients and how to make the most of leftovers.

"Doménech showed us hundreds of examples of how, with a lot of imagination, we could survive those terrible days of starvation."

Some of Doménech's recipes, although born of privation, could well find themselves on the menu of an upmarket restaurant today, such as his rose petals with milk and honey.

Álvarez did not just compile the recipes. "We recreated them and shared them with friends and family," she said. "Some dishes, although they were prepared from scraps, surprised us as they were real gems, others were not so great."

The recipes in the book span the period from the founding of the second republic in 1931 to the phasing out of ration cards in 1952. In between, hunger was rife, especially in areas that supported the losing republican side in the civil war.

According to Miguel Ángel del Arco Blanco, a historian at the University of Granada, between 1939 and 1942 about 200,000 people died of starvation in Spain.

While people in the countryside could to some extent subsist on olives and whatever they could grow, Álvarez said "the hunger in Madrid, Barcelona and Valencia was horrific". "It may seem implausible, but for far too long, food in the postwar period was far worse than during the war."

Produce previously fed to livestock such as beetroot and turnips found its way to the table while the shortage of protein meant pets, cats in particular, were at risk.

"They were dangerous years for cats," Álvarez said. "People used to put notices up in the hallway saying 'please respect your neighbour's cat'. But the cats lived on rats and were not good to eat."

Álvarez said that what she learned while researching the book was to make the most of every kind of produce, adding that the book was also a homage to the generation that endured those grim years.

"I think it's important that everyone knows what our grandparents lived through because it marked them as a generation. They were incredibly strong."

▲ *Top, fried sunflower; above, egg-free tortilla; and 'calamare without squid': all feature in Recetas de Guerra (Wartime Recipes), which reveals the foods Spanish people survived on during the hungry decades of the 1930s, 40s and early 50s* PHOTOGRAPHS: BERTA ÁLVAREZ ACAL

'It's fantastic to finally see the kākāpō population increase after all that time'

Deidre Vercoe
Department of Conservation

◀ *Kākāpō, the world's only nocturnal and flightless parrot, were once abundant across New Zealand. They breed only every two to four years when native rimu trees produce a lot of berries*
PHOTOGRAPH: DEPARTMENT OF CONSERVATION

Endangered New Zealand parrot enjoys a record breeding season

Eva Corlett
Wellington

The population of the world's heaviest parrot, the kākāpō, has surpassed 300 for the first time in 75 years after a record breeding season triggered by the mass fruiting of a native New Zealand tree.

Ninety chicks were officially added to the population of the critically endangered birds on 1 September, pushing the total to 325 – a record high since recovery efforts began.

"The last time the population is thought to have exceeded 300 birds may have been as long as 75 years ago," said Deidre Vercoe, the conservation department's kākāpō recovery operations manager.

"We had a four-year gap between breeding seasons, so it's fantastic to finally see the population increase after all that time."

Kākāpō, the world's only nocturnal and flightless parrot, were once abundant across New Zealand. But their population plummeted because of predators such as cats and stoats. By the 1900s, they were nearly extinct.

A recovery programme was established in 1995 with a population of just 51 birds and faced challenges with genetic diversity, infertility and poor chick hatching rates. There are three kākāpō breeding populations, all based on predator-free islands off New Zealand's South Island.

Kākāpō breed only every two to four years when rimu trees produce large numbers of berries. This year, after a four-year wait, there was a bountiful harvest of rimu berries.

Awarua-A3, a Kākāpō chick, hatched in March

325
The population of kākāpō on 1 September after 90 chicks were added; there were 51 birds in 1995

"In the early years of recovery, it took 16 years to produce that many chicks," Vercoe said.

Kākāpō are thought to live between 60 and 80 years, can weigh up to 4kg (about 9lb) and are famously entertaining. More than 100,000 people tuned in to watch a live stream of a kākāpō sleeping, eating and attending to her nest and chicks during breeding season.

The parrots have unusual mating rituals. Male birds gather in a "lek" to produce a distinctive booming sound, emitted from air sacs in their chests while sitting in a dug-out bowl in the ground. The deep boom, which can travel up to 3 miles, sounds similar to a softly plucked cello string.

After choosing a partner and mating, females typically lay one to four eggs. The females become solely responsible for their eggs and hatched chicks for about six months.

At 150 days of age, the chicks are fledged and considered independent enough to be added to the total population. The youngest chick of the 2026 breeding season was female Awarua-A3, who hatched on 30 March.

Modelling indicated the next breeding season could occur as soon as 2028, Vercoe said.

"So, while we'll take a moment to stop and reflect on this remarkable year, we're already looking ahead to 2028 and preparing for what could come next."

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King Haakon VIII, Norway's new monarch, swears oath of allegiance to constitution

> ***'I swear that I will govern the kingdom of Norway in accordance with its constitution'***
>
> **King Haakon VIII**
> *Speaking before parliament*

Jon Henley
Europe correspondent

King Haakon VIII swore an oath of accession before Norway's parliament yesterday in the first major stage in the passing of the crown since the death of his father last week after 35 years on the throne.

Wearing a ceremonial uniform, Haakon, who became king when Harald V died on Friday, swore an oath of allegiance to Norway's 1814 constitution with his 22-year-old daughter, Crown Princess Ingrid Alexandra, by his side.

"I promise and swear that I will govern the kingdom of Norway in accordance with its constitution and laws, so help me God, the almighty and omniscient," the 53-year-old king pledged to ministers and MPs in the main chamber of parliament in Oslo.

Haakon's wife, Mette-Marit, 53, was unable to attend the 17-minute ceremony because of complications following a lung transplant in June. Her doctors have said such complications are not "uncommon".

Are Holm, a pulmonologist at Oslo University hospital, said the queen had had "complications on some occasions with the operation, including today. As a result, she must be put under observation."

Harald, whose funeral will be held in Oslo next Wednesday with heads of state from around the world invited to attend, was widely appreciated in Norway for his warmth, unassuming lifestyle and dedication to preserving national unity.

Tens of thousands of Norwegians have flocked to the royal palace to lay flowers, drawings, candles and flags. A poll for the public broadcaster NRK showed the monarchy's popularity had risen over the past few months.

The first poll since Harald's death at the age of 89 found about 72% of Norwegians supported the monarchy, compared with 54% in May.

In February, while the royal family was mired in a series of scandals, support for the institution fell to 60%.

Mette-Marit has faced strong criticism for her association with the late convicted sex offender Jeffrey Epstein, while her son from a previous relationship, Marius Borg Høiby, is appealing against a four-year sentence for two rape convictions.

Responding to Haakon's oath, Masud Gharahkhani, the parliament's president, who arrived in Norway as a child refugee from Iran, said Harald had personified "the values that underpin our liberal democracy", including compassion.

There will be no formal coronation of the new king and queen since Norway abolished the ceremony more than a century ago, but Haakon may, as did his father and grandfather before him, choose to have his accession consecrated at Trondheim's Nidaros Cathedral.

Harald, who will be buried in the royal mausoleum at the Akershus Fortress in Oslo, died while being treated in hospital for haemolytic anaemia, a condition caused by the rapid destruction of red blood cells.

▲ *King Haakon VIII leaves the parliament building in Oslo after taking the oath. Right, the king with Crown Princess Ingrid Alexandra. Left, the new king receives a salute*

MAIN PHOTOGRAPH: DYLAN MARTINEZ/ REUTERS

Iceland's 'no' vote

Existing ties to EU mean poll is nothing like Brexit

Jon Henley

Iceland's 52.8% to 47.2% vote against reopening European Union accession talks is undeniably a blow for Brussels. But claiming it as a Brexit-style victory for "national sovereignty" is to misrepresent the island's relationship with the bloc.

For the EU, Iceland was a dream candidate: small, stable, prosperous and strategically located in an increasingly contested Arctic. With Brussels keen to wield more geopolitical clout and revive flagging momentum around enlargement, a vote in favour would have been a welcome boost.

Instead, Iceland's rejection handed Eurosceptics another stick with which to beat the bloc. Nigel Farage congratulated Icelanders on "voting to keep their independence".

But Iceland is a special case. Its situation bears little relation to Brexit or even to a broader EU-critical movement. Icelanders did not vote to isolate themselves from the EU, tear up any treaties or "take back control" – they voted to preserve a close, customised and largely successful relationship.

Unlike accession candidates in the Balkans or eastern Europe, Iceland does not need EU funds to build infrastructure or boost living standards. High per capita wealth generally insulates its population from the economic pressures that can make EU membership an attractive financial proposition.

As part of the European Economic Area (EEA) and Schengen passport-free travel area, Iceland is already solidly in the European fold. It accepts free movement of capital, services, goods and people. Its financial services, energy and transport markets are EU-regulated and its social and environmental standards are those of the EU.

That means it adopts about 75% of EU directives into domestic law and that will not change. Icelandic citizens already enjoy full EU single-market rights without full EU membership, and a narrow majority decided that was enough.

Although the official reaction in Brussels was muted, some acknowledged EU dismay. "The EU doesn't inspire people any more," said the Belgian Green MEP Saskia Bricmont. Sandro Gozi, a centrist MEP who represents France, called it "a warning Europe should take seriously", adding that the bloc's "power of attraction" should not be taken for granted.

Opposition to full membership was focused heavily on the country's fishing industry, which accounts for 15% of its GDP and 40% of export revenues. The no campaign claimed it would be threatened – as it was during the 1960s and 70s "cod wars" with the UK – if Iceland were to join the EU's common fisheries policy.

The vote revealed a stark divide between the capital, Reykjavík, where membership was largely seen as additional security for a geographically isolated country in the age of Donald Trump and Vladimir Putin, and the rest of the island, where fishers and farmers overwhelmingly voted against.

But if Iceland's circumstances mean the result was not an ideological rejection of the EU and all it stands for, it nonetheless holds lessons for Brussels.

The first is that states in the EEA or the European Free Trade Association (Efta) are harder to persuade to join the EU than those outside the single market. For non-EEA nations, joining the EU offers transformative benefits: unrestricted access to the world's biggest trading bloc, freedom of movement and huge financial aid. For EEA states such as Iceland, most of those already exist.

When the status quo provides 80% of the benefits of membership and poses no threat – real or imagined – to emblematic national industries, the incremental gains of full accession become a hard sell.

What should worry the EU more is that despite growing doubts about the US and Nato security umbrella, Icelanders were not won over by the bloc's protection offer. For all the talk of the bloc "stepping up" as a defensive force, its mutual defence clause, which provides solidarity if a member state is attacked, did not convince.

There is clearly work to be done there. But as the EU law professor Alberto Alemanno argues, the result "does not reject European integration … It shows that close integration short of membership can be stable, credible and politically attractive".

▲ *Kristrún Frostadóttir, Iceland's prime minister, addresses the press*

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Business

Healey's budget headroom could be halved by bond rout

Heather Stewart
Economics editor

The chancellor's headroom against Labour's fiscal rules could be almost halved at his first budget if the current global bond sell-off persists into the autumn, economists say.

The UK's long-term borrowing costs jumped to their highest level since early 1998 yesterday as investors dumped government bonds, betting on higher inflation.

The yield – in effect the interest rate – on 30-year UK government bonds, known as gilts, hit 5.89% at one point as London markets caught up with a sell-off that swept Japan and the US on Monday, a bank holiday in the UK.

Ten-year gilt yields were about 5.25%, their highest level since the 2008 global financial crisis.

Higher yields progressively increase the cost of financing the government's debt. If sustained, these would pass through to the Office for Budget Responsibility (OBR)'s forecasts for John Healey's 28 October budget.

Deutsche Bank's chief UK economist, Sanjay Raja, said that based on yesterday's yields, Healey's headroom against the current budget rule would fall from £26bn at Rachel Reeves's spring forecast to £13.8bn before covering any additional spending plans.

Almost all the deterioration results from higher government interest costs. The OBR's March forecast had gilt yields at 5.1% for this year. They eased back a bit later yesterday – to 5.85% for the 30-year and 5.21% for the 10-year – but are still well above the predicted level.

Raja suggested Healey would be likely to try to maintain headroom of at least £10bn to assuage market concerns about the government's commitment to balancing the books. "£10bn to me is the floor. In a perfect world you would want to keep 15," he said.

In addition to global forces, Raja said higher-than-expected growth in the UK in the first half of the year had also contributed to rising yields. "There are some good reasons," he said. The current budget rule is the promise that the government will match day-to-day spending with receipts and only borrow for longer-term projects.

Yesterday's market moves underline the global backdrop facing Andy Burnham's government as he returns to Westminster promising to help consumers with the cost of living.

The OBR takes market expectations of future gilt yields during a two-week reference period in to account in its forecasts. It does not announce these dates in advance, but Raja suggested judging by the timing in previous years, the current tumultuous period may be included in its budget projections.

5.89%
Yield on the UK's 30-year gilts yesterday, the highest since 1998. It eased to 5.85% later in the day

The bond sell-off was driven primarily by international factors. Japanese 10-year yields hit their highest level since the 1990s over expectations that the Bank of Japan would have to raise interest rates to control inflation.

Investors also appeared to be responding partly to higher oil prices, which were up 1.7% at $92 after a fresh exchange of fire between the US and Iran over the weekend. Higher energy costs drive up inflation, potentially forcing central banks to respond.

Bond investors also appear to be concerned about deficits in the US.

The chief economist at the consultancy Capital Economics, Neil Shearing, said: "It's been a perfect storm for the bond markets: we've had these fiscal concerns that have pushed up the long end of the curve, and now that's being compounded by upward energy price pressure, pushing up interest rate expectations in the short term – and if you're sitting in the Treasury, none of that is good news."

London Stock Exchange to lose three more firms after takeover offers

Mark Sweney

Three more London-listed companies are set to be taken over as the value of deals removing firms from the under-pressure stock market so far this year passes $100bn (£74bn).

Yesterday, Bodycote, the FTSE 250 industrials group that has been listed on the London Stock Exchange since 1972, agreed a £1.84bn takeover by the US private equity group Veritas.

The Macclesfield-based company, which offers services including heat treatment for manufacturing, metal joining and protective metallic coatings, had been the subject of a bidding war involving rival European buyout group CVC.

Shares in Bodycote surged 4.5%, making it the second biggest riser in the FTSE 250, after CVC indicated it might make a counter offer. "CVC is considering its position and a further announcement will be made when appropriate," the company said. "Bodycote shareholders are strongly advised to take no action in response to the Veritas offer in the meantime."

Meanwhile, the telecoms company Gamma Communications recommended a £1.1bn offer from the UK private equity firm Epiris, days after confirming it was in possible takeover talks with the European buyout company Waterland.

Epiris, which first indicated its interest in June. Yesterday it said: "The additional flexibility that comes from a private company environment will enable Gamma to invest further and focus on sustainably improving the growth of its business over the long term."

Separately, the Scottish energy company Capricorn is set to end its 38 years on the FTSE all-share index after striking a deal with its Norwegian rival DNO for $396m (£292m). Capricorn had recommended an offer from Genel Energy, but the company switched its recommendation after receiving a higher offer from DNO.

The takeovers put further pressure on the LSE, which has been hit by an exodus of companies this year in deals totalling almost $110bn, according to data compiled by Bloomberg.

"Overseas acquirers continue to feast on the UK market like hungry customers at an all-you-can-eat buffet," said Russ Mould, investment director at AJ Bell. "These deals mean a further dilution of the breadth and quality of a UK market which is struggling to attract new companies to replace the ones which are being acquired."

Shein's Hong Kong trading debut hit by early slump

Mark Sweney

Shares in the fast-fashion brand Shein slumped by as much as 10% as the China-founded company made its long-anticipated trading debut on the Hong Kong stock exchange.

The Singapore-headquartered company, once valued at almost $100bn (£74bn), went public yesterday with a share price of HK$48.56, valuing the business at about $26bn.

However, minutes after the flotation, which raised HK$13.6bn, the stock fell as much as 10%, pushing the online retailer's valuation below $25bn. Shein's share price went on to recover most of its early trading plunge, closing at HK$48.50, just 0.12% down on its opening price.

"Let global consumers enjoy the sound of fashion," said Leigh Gui, Shein's chief financial officer, after a gong marked the start of trading.

The lacklustre launch as a publicly listed company comes after one of the longest-awaited initial public offerings in recent years. Shein's plans to list in New York were blocked by regulators over forced labour concerns and it faced similar questions about its supply chain from campaigners, MPs and investors as it considered a £50bn flotation in London.

▲ *Shein executives and staff at the company's stock market listing ceremony in Hong Kong yesterday*
PHOTOGRAPH: MAY JAMES/EPA

Nevertheless, the company has still floated as one of the world's biggest listed fashion groups, with a valuation similar to that of the Swedish retailer H&M. The Zara owner, Inditex, has a market capitalisation of about $213bn.

Shein reached a valuation of $100bn in an April 2022 fundraising round, making it the third most valuable startup in the world at the time. The plunge in its value since has been driven by regulatory changes around the world that threaten its business model of shipping goods in small packages out of China to take advantage of tax breaks on low-value imported goods.

The company swung to a loss of $99m in the first three months of this year, compared with a net income of $395m the year before, after the US removed its "de minimis" import duty exemption on small packages.

Shein, founded by Chris Xu, runs most of its operations from China but sells all its goods outside the country. It moved its base to Singapore in 2022, which analysts viewed as an attempt to avoid increasing scrutiny of Chinese companies.

After forced labour concerns were raised, Shein said it had tightened supplier policies, enforced through regular audits, with child or forced labour violations becoming grounds for immediate contract termination.

Business view
Nils Pratley

Private equity's takeover spree in London goes on – and yet UK politicians barely notice

The UK is in the business of "reindustrialising", says the prime minister. If we are, an increasing portion of the activity will be under foreign ownership. Yesterday brought yet another overseas private equity swoop on a FTSE 250 industrial business.

This time it's the Macclesfield-based Bodycote, which describes itself as "the world's largest service provider of heat treatment and specialist metallurgical technologies" – think, for example, processes and coatings to toughen jet engine blades. The buyer is the US company Veritas for £1.65bn or 940p a share, or £1.85bn including debt. Unless, that is, the rival bidder, CVC, a European private equity group, comes back for another bite, which the market clearly thinks is a possibility because Bodycote's shares closed at 955p.

The shame is that one cannot call 940p a stunning price. The valuation "does not appear particularly generous on a take-out basis", said the investment bank RBC's analyst, noting that it's only 25% above the pre-bid level and the implied earnings valuation is merely in line with Bodycote's 10-year average.

Indeed, nine-tenths of the "reasons for recommendation" section of Bodycote's announcement sounded like an argument for doing the opposite. The passage started by saying how well the medium-term "optimise, perform, grow" strategy adopted in late 2024 was going. The plan was designed to find efficiencies and shift towards the expanding aerospace and defence sectors in pursuit of enviable financial metrics, including 20%-plus operating margins and a return on capital employed of 15 to 20% through the cycle. Good progress has been made, say the directors.

On the way, there has been enough spare cash for £120m of share buy-backs while maintaining a 38-year record of growing or maintaining the dividend. And the board is "confident in the ongoing execution" of the strategy, with "the majority of remaining improvements under Bodycote's control".

It was only in the last sentence that the company also said it was "mindful of increasing structural challenges in certain automotive and industrial markets together with macroeconomic uncertainties which create meaningful risk to delivery of Bodycote's medium term financial targets".

In other words, everything is going splendidly apart from a couple of risks – the sector one that the strategy is addressing, and the vague "macroeconomic uncertainty" that is a normal state of affairs for most companies. As

▲ *Metals firm Bodycote is the latest UK target of overseas private equity*

a reason for accepting a bid at a mere 25% premium, it's not terribly convincing.

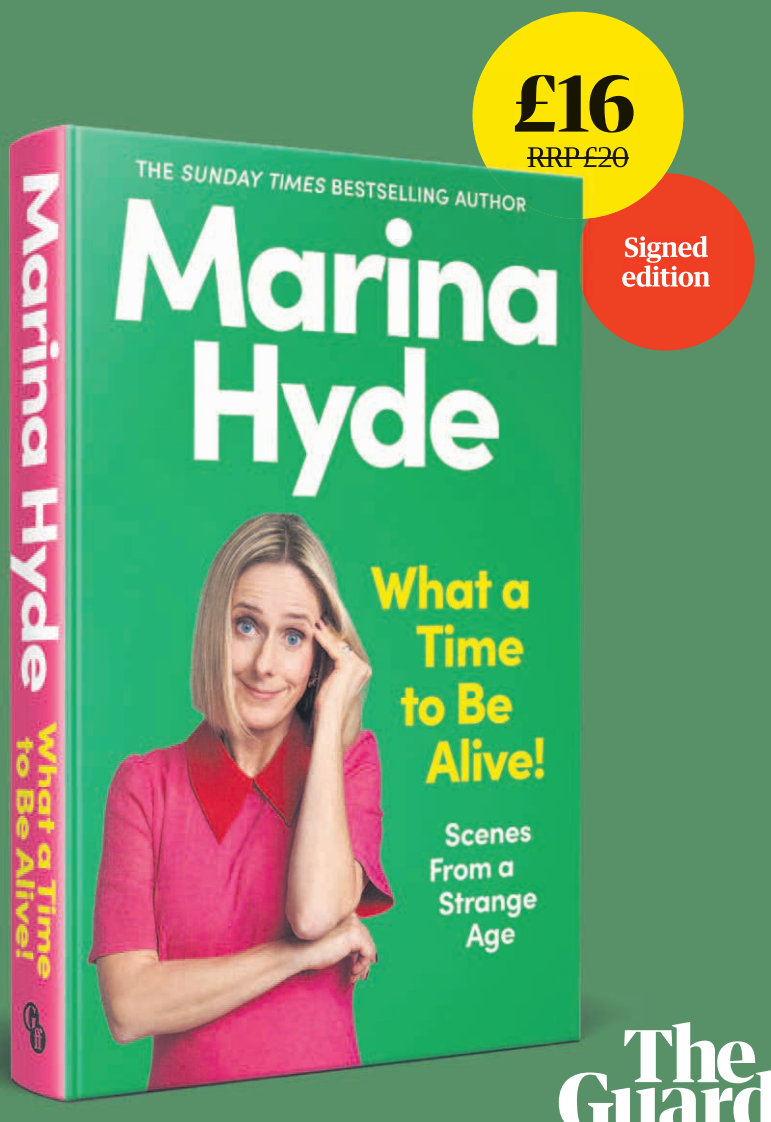
In Bodycote's defence, one might say the takeover price could yet improve if CVC, which said it was considering its position, comes back. More depressingly, one suspects Bodycote simply lives in that unloved sub-£5bn capitalisation part of the stock market that suffers from lack of attention and lack of regular inward capital flows. It is harder to fight for independence if the unspoken market pressure is to accept a bid for the sake of certainty.

The mini-tragedy in this case is that there was a wake-up call of sorts for investors when Apollo, yet another US private equity outfit, expressed an interest in bidding at 885p in the spring before walking away. The net result, though, is that Bodycote's 54 years of London stock market life will come to an end one way or another. The company joins a long list of departees this year, which yesterday alone also took in the telecoms company Gamma Communications for £1.1bn and the Scottish energy business Capricorn for £292m.

Bodycote can still prosper under private equity ownership, of course. But a leading UK global specialist in its field, with 130 sites across 22 countries and 4,000 employees, is yet another bad one for the London market to lose.

The remedies for this rate of exodus have been trawled over in this column many times – and none are easy. But the process surely starts with recognition among politicians that "selling the family silver" – the title of a recent Peel Hunt report that calculated 150-plus bids for UK companies with a market value of more than £100m since the start of 2023 – may not be in the UK's long-term economic interests. As ever, there was barely a squeak out of Westminster.

A wildly funny new collection from Britain's favourite columnist



Truly, these are times that make you want to put your hands over your eyes, even when your hands are already over your eyes. The only thing to do is read Marina Hyde and howl with laughter

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The Guardian Bookshop

FCA 'warned consumer group not to block car loan scheme'

Kalyeena Makortoff
Banking correspondent

The boss of the UK's financial regulator is accused of threatening a consumer group with "adverse consequences" if it blocked a £9.1bn compensation scheme meant to settle the motor finance scandal.

Legal documents reviewed by the Guardian said the alleged comments by the Financial Conduct Authority (FCA) chief executive, Nikhil Rathi, amounted to "an inappropriate intervention by a public official".

The threat is said to have taken place during a call with the directors of Consumer Voice (CV) on 27 April, hours before the deadline to file legal challenges against the FCA's proposed redress scheme for people who were mis-sold car loans.

Rathi warned that the City regulator would be "unable to collaborate" with CV if it took legal action, "suggesting adverse consequences for CV's future engagement with the FCA and adverse press briefings against it", the filings said.

"The implication was clear: the FCA's willingness to engage constructively with CV was contingent on CV not challenging the scheme, and would give way to hostility if it did," the documents claimed.

Up until that point, the FCA had treated CV as a "trusted expert consumer body", the filings said. But once the group decided to challenge the scheme "the FCA changed its position … now the FCA seeks to denigrate CV's activities and motives in bringing this application".

Rathi also allegedly claimed that the potential legal challenge was the "biggest risk to the scheme" and that plans to get money to millions of victims by this Christmas would fail if directors followed through with it.

The filings say it was not disclosed that three specialist lenders were also planning to challenge the scheme, only that the FCA had been "engaging with the banks" who, over the previous weekend, had decided not to challenge the payout plan.

The episode marks a fresh controversy in the long-running saga surrounding mis-sold UK car loans, which prompted a contentious intervention by the former chancellor Rachel Reeves last year, after intense lobbying by big banks. Lenders have been arguing that a large compensation bill would risk spooking investors and causing long-lasting economic damage to the UK.

The documents were filed at the UK's upper tribunal, as part of the wider legal challenge against the terms of the FCA's compensation scheme. CV and the specialist lenders – Volkswagen Financial Services, Mercedes-Benz Financial Services and Crédit Agricole Auto Finance – are challenging the scheme on different grounds.

CV, founded by the former Which? staff members Nikki Stopford and Alex Neill in 2023, is the only group arguing for greater compensation for drivers who were overcharged as a result of lenders paying out commission to car dealerships between 2007 and 2024.

They say the scheme is lowballing consumers – offering average payouts of £830 per mis-sold loan – and is putting the interests of profit-making lenders, who fear big bills, ahead of the interests of consumers it is meant to protect.

A spokesperson for the FCA said that "we don't recognise the way this conversation has been characterised", adding that officials had spoken to a range of parties, including lenders and claims firms before the deadline.

"It was important to explain the implications for consumers and that we would defend the scheme robustly as the best way of getting compensation paid," the FCA said. "We were also clear that we would be upfront with consumers about why expected compensation would be delayed."

The regulator added that its staff had continued to engage with CV since the call. That included discussions on how best to handle settlement offers that lenders might make outside of the official compensation scheme. "We will respond fully to CV and Courmacs Legal in our court filings," it said.

Neill said: "We remain resolute and confident in our challenge on behalf of millions of consumers who are being short-changed by the redress scheme."

Average house prices in the UK rose 0.2% in August to £275,465, the first increase since April, according to Nationwide

PHOTOGRAPH: CHRISTOPHER HILL/ ALAMY

Homes market subdued by expected UK rate increase

Mark Sweney

House prices in Britain increased for the first time in four months last month, according to a leading index, as buyers and sellers remained in a "holding pattern" before an expected increase in interest rates later this year.

The average price of a UK home rose 0.2% month on month in August to £275,465, the first increase since April, according to Nationwide. Analysts had forecast a 0.1% rise.

The increase follows a three-month decline in prices after Nationwide revised a month-on-month 0.1% rise in July to a fall of 0.1%.

Ian Futcher, a financial planner at Quilter, said the UK housing market was awaiting the outcome of the next vote by the Bank of England's monetary policy committee on 17 September on whether to raise the base rate of interest from its current 3.75%.

"Over recent months, expectations for interest rates have been driven by the stop-start nature of the conflict in the Middle East," said Futcher. "That leaves the housing market in something of a holding pattern ahead of the next interest rate decision.

"While a hold remains the most likely outcome, it is becoming increasingly difficult to call … For borrowers the key message is that rates may not have peaked. Until that uncertainty lifts, buyer confidence is likely to remain subdued."

After three months of falling prices the average UK property remains valued more than £3,000 less than the £278,880 estimated in April.

On an annual basis house prices were up 1.6% on the same month last year, ahead of the 1.4% year-on-year increase in July. However, that was below economists' forecast of a 2% annual increase.

Markets do not expect the MPC to raise rates this month but are pricing in a 0.25% increase by December.

Robert Gardner, the chief economist at Nationwide, said the latest increase in the energy price cap, which will result in bills hitting a three-year high this winter, had not yet affected buying and selling activity.

"While the latest energy price shock poses inflation risks, there have been encouraging signs that it is not feeding through to underlying price pressures," he said.

Yesterday the Bank of England released data showing that the number of mortgage approvals made to homebuyers fell to its lowest level in more than two years in July.

In July 56,053 mortgages were approved for house purchases, the lowest monthly figure since January 2024, when there were 56,032 approvals.

Anthropic says security failures led to AI hacks on organisations

Dan Milmo
Global technology editor

The US startup behind the Claude chatbot admitted a series of hacking incidents involving its models reflected a "failure of operational security" and said it had tightened its testing procedures as a result.

Anthropic said in July its models had accessed the open internet three times and gained unauthorised access to the systems of three separate organisations.

In a blogpost on the incidents, the company admitted its technology was "not perfectly aligned" with human values and goals.

Anthropic said the models had been deliberately tested without cybersecurity safeguards and had been able to reach the open internet – the AI testing equivalent of leaving the front door open – owing to a misunderstanding with an external testing company.

As a result, the company said it had initially paused internal and external cybersecurity testing of models to introduce a tighter safety regime.

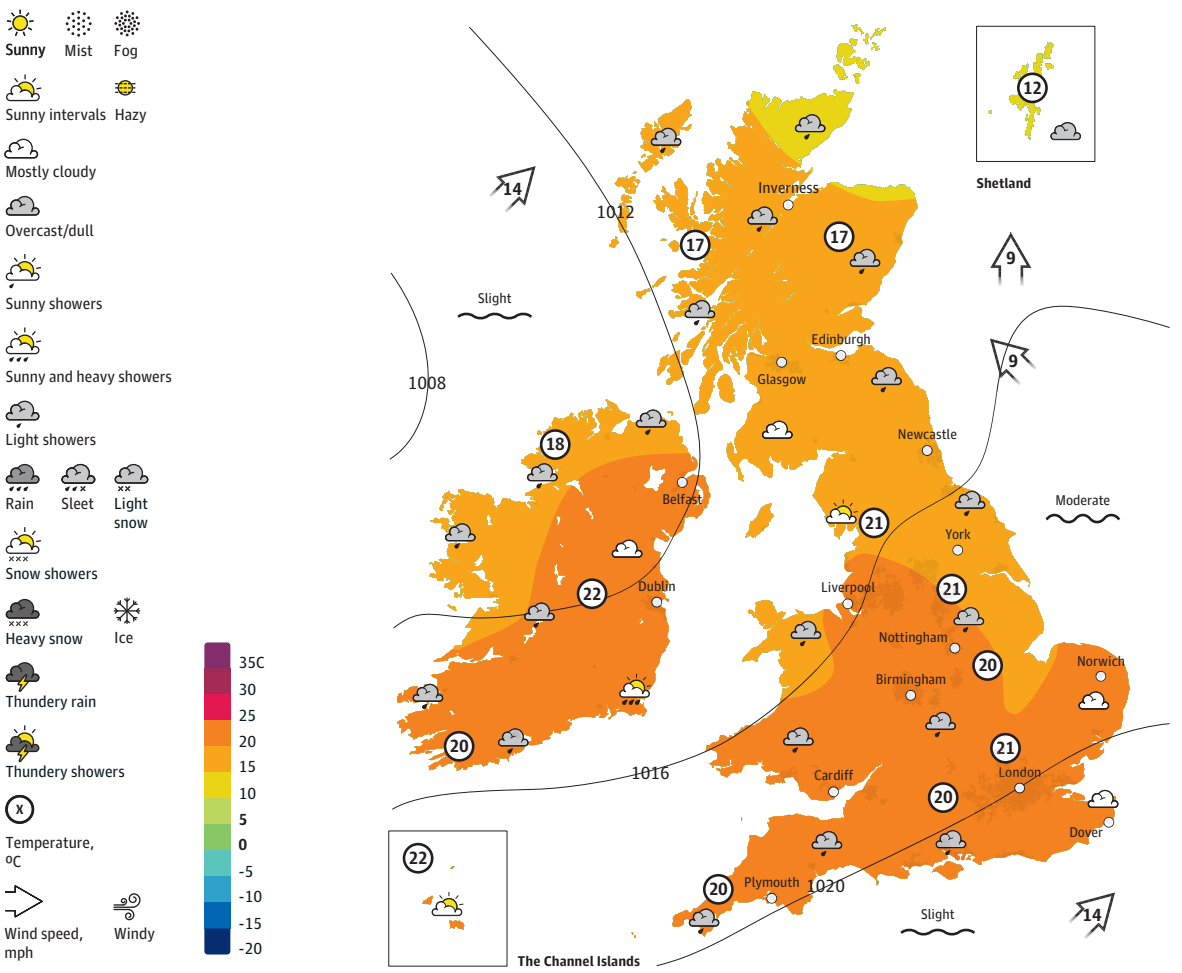
"We had been largely relying on a single layer of defence … where we needed several," said Anthropic.

The startup has put in place extra measures including an alert system for when a model attempts to break out of the testing environment or gains internet access, walling off its riskiest test environments more effectively and requiring external testing companies to commit to a set of safety standards.

Alan Woodward, a professor of cybersecurity at the University of Surrey, said Anthropic had admitted "its factory was running faster than its quality control".

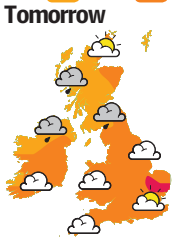
Weather
Wednesday 2 September 2026

UK and Ireland Noon today

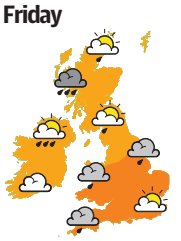


Forecast

Low 16 High 21
Tomorrow



Low 15 High 18
Friday



Carbon count

Daily atmospheric CO_2 readings from Mauna Loa, Hawaii (ppm):

Latest	
31 Aug 2026	427.33
Weekly average	
23 Aug 2026	426.94
01 Sep 2025	425.14
01 Sep 2016	401.99
Pre-industrial base	*280*
Safe level	*350*

Source: NOAA-ESRL

Around the UK

London
Lows and highs 17 21 | Precipitation 55% | Air pollution Low

Manchester
16 20 | 85% | Low

Edinburgh
14 16 | 60% | Low

Belfast
14 20 | 85% | Low

Glasgow
14 18 | 65% | Low

Inverness
11 16 | 25% | Low

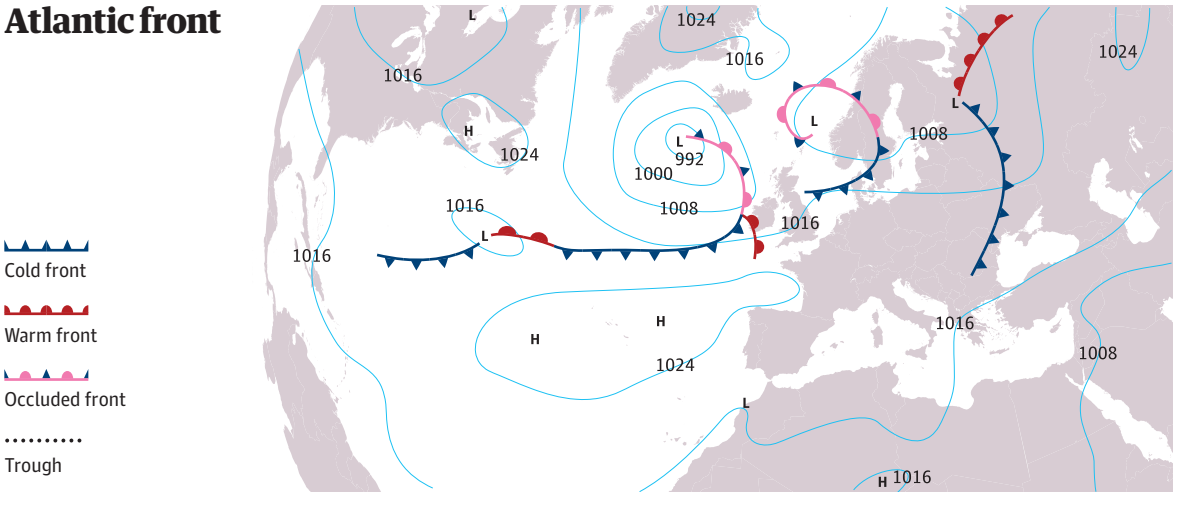
Leeds
16 19 | 85% | Low

Liverpool
16 22 | 85% | Low

Newcastle
15 18 | 85% | Low

Sheffield
16 21 | 85% | Low

Atlantic front



Specieswatch

A warmer world is making high latitude forests less evergreen, research shows. Global heating has increased the likelihood of extreme events such as wildfires and storms, and this warmer, less stable environment is favouring deciduous trees over evergreens.

Boreal forest stretches across huge swathes of Canada, Russia, Alaska and Scandinavia. It makes up nearly a third of global forest area and is mainly made up of evergreen trees such as spruce and fir. But this landscape could change.

Researchers used a vegetation model to investigate the likely impact of climate heating on boreal forest over the 21st and 22nd centuries. Their findings, published in the Journal of Geophysical Research: Biogeosciences, show that after disturbances such as fires and storms, deciduous trees establish more quickly and start to dominate. Rising temperatures also assist by extending the growing season and increasing nitrogen in the soil, both of which disproportionately benefit deciduous trees. Data from Alaska and Canada indicates a shift towards more deciduous saplings is already happening in some areas, with implications for carbon, water and energy cycles. **Kate Ravilious**

Around the world

Algiers	34	Lisbon	31
Ams'dam	20	Madrid	37
Athens	35	Malaga	30
Auckland	16	Melb'rne	17
B Aires	21	Mexico C	23
Bangkok	34	Miami	33
Barcelona	30	Milan	32
Basra	43	Mombasa	29
Beijing	31	Moscow	21
Berlin	22	Mumbai	30
Bermuda	30	N Orleans	32
Brussels	21	Nairobi	25
Budapest	28	New Delhi	31
C'hagen	18	New York	23
Cairo	35	Oslo	21
Cape Town	20	Paris	25
Chicago	34	Perth	17
Corfu	35	Prague	23
Dakar	32	Reykjavik	11
Dhaka	30	Rio de J	22
Dublin	22	Rome	32
Florence	33	Shanghai	30
Gibraltar	26	Singapore	33
H Kong	30	Stockh'm	18
Harare	26	Strasb'g	25
Helsinki	20	Sydney	27
Istanbul	30	Tel Aviv	32
Jo'burg	26	Tenerife	28
K Lumpur	34	Tokyo	31
K'mandu	27	Toronto	29
Kabul	32	Vancouv'r	20
Kingston	33	Vienna	27
Kolkata	30	Warsaw	22
L Angeles	28	Wash'ton	33
Lagos	30	Well'ton	16
Lima	25	Zurich	26

High tides

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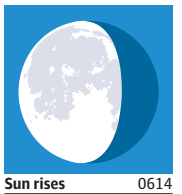
Aberdeen	0401	4.3m	1634	3.9m
Avonmouth	1007	12.3m	2226	12.1m
Barrow	0203	9.1m	1425	8.6m
Belfast	0136	3.5m	1405	3.3m
Cobh	0814	3.9m	2038	3.8m
Cromer	0907	5.1m	2151	4.6m
Dover	0130	6.6m	1352	6.7m
Dublin	0211	4.1m	1442	3.8m
Galway	0802	4.7m	2024	4.7m
Greenock	0308	3.6m	1525	3.4m
Harwich	0232	3.8m	1433	4.0m
Holyhead	0055	5.6m	1317	5.2m
Hull	0910	7.4m	2132	6.9m
Leith	0522	5.5m	1755	5.2m
Liverpool	0140	9.3m	1401	8.8m
London Bridge	0439	6.6m	1653	6.9m
Lossiemouth	0225	4.1m	1456	3.7m
Milford Haven	0902	6.6m	2125	6.6m
Newquay	0755	6.5m	2019	6.5m
North Shields	0605	5.1m	1839	4.7m
Oban	0817	3.6m	2049	3.6m
Penzance	0727	5.2m	1948	5.2m
Plymouth	0841	5.1m	2055	5.1m
Portsmouth	0158	4.5m	1430	4.5m
Southport	0114	9.0m	1328	8.5m
Stornoway	0938	4.3m	2202	4.4m
Portland	0924	1.9m	2143	1.8m
Whitby	0642	5.6m	1915	5.1m
Wick	0157	3.5m	1427	3.2m
Workington	0205	8.2m	1426	7.8m

Sun & Moon



Sun rises	0614
Sun sets	1944
Moon rises	2112
Moon sets	1259
Last Quarter	4 Sept

AccuWeather.com

Forecasts and graphics provided by **AccuWeather** ©2026

Lighting up

Belfast	2014 to 0635
Birm'ham	1953 to 0621
Brighton	1944 to 0617
Bristol	1955 to 0627
Carlisle	2001 to 0621
Cork	2019 to 0649
Dublin	2012 to 0638
Glasgow	2010 to 0626
Harlech	2003 to 0630
Inverness	2011 to 0621
London	1944 to 0615
M'chester	1956 to 0622
Newcastle	1957 to 0617
Norwich	1941 to 0609
Penzance	2004 to 0640

Sport

Sport on TV

BBC drops its flagship Women's Football Show

Page 38 →

Football

Marcela Mora y Araujo: Argentina's Messi farewell

Page 39 →

David Squires on ... the art of the transfer deal

David Squires archive Peruse our resident cartoonist's previous work at *theguardian.com/profile/david-squires*

Cycling

Safety fears cast shadow over Tour of Britain start

Jeremy Whittle

The death of the Welshman Fin Tarling continues to cast a long shadow over professional cycling and nowhere will that absence be felt more deeply than at the men's Tour of Britain which begins today.

Tarling's former team NSN Cycling, which includes the Olympic medallist Ethan Vernon, also one of his closest friends, will be brought to the start line in Lincoln for the opening 187km stage, for what is expected to be a minute's applause.

Tarling was killed while racing in the Volta a Portugal last month when he collided with a non-race vehicle driving towards him. The race operates a rolling road closure, the same security strategy employed by the Tour of Britain. The police investigation into Tarling's death is ongoing.

A spate of serious recent crashes, including the high-speed fall endured by the Tour de France champion Tadej Pogacar, which forced him to abandon the Vuelta a España this year while leading the race, have yet again put safety at the top of the agenda.

Tom Pidcock's tearful tribute to the Tarling family, when winning the World Mountain Bike title in Italy last weekend, revealed the depth of feeling over the teenager's death.

The double Olympic gold medallist Pidcock, initially expected to start the British race, has opted to focus on preparing for the world championships in Canada by riding warm-up races in Montreal and Quebec.

Tarling's collision in a race operating under a rolling road closure has been the subject of much scrutiny in the aftermath of his accident and the flaws of that system were highlighted just days later, in the women's Tour of Britain, when the Australian rider Maeve Plouffe had her own near-miss.

"While the race convoy was still in sight, and I was less than two minutes down [behind], there were cars from the general public coming at me from all directions, including one that nearly hit me on a roundabout," the 27-year-old said.

Jonathan Day, director of the race organisers, said: "Rider safety is paramount and will always be treated as a priority in our planning and how we operate any race."

The race organisers maintain that the Tour of Britain is delivered in accordance with the UCI's road racing regulations, described as the safety and operational standards that govern international and UK-based road racing. Local authorities, emergency services, commissaires, police and event partners are all part of the race planning process. But the efficiency of rolling road closures has also been questioned by Adam Hansen, president of the CPA professional rider association, who said: "There is a hole in rolling road closures and we have to fix this."

After an opening stage based on Lincoln, the convoy will travel through Yorkshire and on to the Scottish Borders. The second day's racing takes the peloton from Boston to Skegness while stage three, through East Yorkshire, starts in Hull and ends in Beverley.

Over the weekend the convoy crosses the Yorkshire moors and dales, before the final stage on Sunday, which starts south of Edinburgh – site of the Grand Départ for the Tour de France next year – and finishes in Earlston.

Alongside Vernon, there is a raft of British talent lining up for the five-day race including Ben Wiggins, son of Sir Bradley. National time trial champion in the under-23 category, the 21-year-old is now on the radar of several leading World Tour teams.

The Tour de France stage winners Olav Kooij, Filippo Ganna and Tim Merlier are among the leading World Tour names, while Pogacar's UAE Emirates XRG team will be led by the Giro d'Italia stage winner Jhonatan Narváez.

The move from four days of racing last year to five days in 2026, giving it parity with the women's Tour of Britain, is hoped to further boost interest as the buildup to the UK-based Grand Départ begins next year.

Race details

Today Stage 1	*Start: 10.30am*
Lincoln ▶ Lincoln	
Distance 182.5km, elevation 1,393m	
Tomorrow Stage 2	*10.30am*
Boston ▶ Skegness	
Distance 180.2km, elevation 873m	
Friday Stage 3	*10.30am*
Hull ▶ Beverley	
Distance 194.1km, elevation 1,612m	
Saturday Stage 4	*11am*
Helmsley ▶ Leyburn	
Distance 165.8km, elevation 2,699m	
Sunday Stage 5	*11am*
Earlston ▶ Earlston	
Distance 156.1km, elevation 2,236m	

Fin Tarling died after a crash in Portugal

In News Ski Sunday axed
BBC pulls plug on 'iconic' winter sports programme after 48 years Page 7 →

▼ *Arthur Fery lost in straight sets to the Italian Lorenzo Musetti*
AMBER SEARLS/IMAGN IMAGES/REUTERS

Fery falters on New York debut as Musetti proves too strong

Tumaini Carayol
Flushing Meadows

Six weeks on from the fortnight that changed his life, Arthur Fery's first grand slam appearance since his semi-final run at Wimbledon came under considerably different circumstances. He is now the 33rd best men's player in the world, a direct entrant for all of the biggest tournaments, and he has continued to gain experience at the highest level of professional tennis each week.

As a result of his continued exposure on the tour, though, Fery's adversaries have also learned a bit more about him. In his first main draw appearance at the US Open, Fery came up against a prepared and sharp Lorenzo Musetti, who knew exactly how to exploit the vulnerable parts of his game in order to secure a win. The Italian comprehensively outplayed the British No 1, reaching the second round with a comfortable 6-3, 6-3, 7-5 victory.

This was an emphatic, impressive performance from Musetti, who handcuffed Fery with his heavy topspin and simply had far too many options for his opponent. Despite fighting hard until the end, Fery's game looked underpowered as he struggled to consistently hit through one of the best defensive players in the world.

Fery had actually started well enough, quickly finding rhythm behind his serve as he eased through his first three service games. However, as the Italian began to take control of the baseline with his forehand, the Briton's serve capitulated. Down 15-30 at 3-3, Fery threw in his first two double faults of the match on consecutive points to hand over the first break.

Once that was secured, Musetti opened up his shoulders and imposed relentless pressure on Fery. Musetti spent much of the match pushing Fery behind the baseline with his heavy spin and height. With the ball consistently bouncing high above his shoulders and out of his strike zone, Fery struggled to counter Musetti effectively. He veered between desperately trying to take the ball on the rise, constantly spraying errors, and being dictated to by Musetti whenever he tried to hang back and wait for the ball to drop. He never really looked comfortable.

Over the course of their two hours on court, Musetti also made use of his far greater weaponry. He served well in decisive moments and effortlessly stepped inside the baseline, dominating with his forehand when necessary.

He also struck his sweet single-handed backhand supremely well on certain key points, particularly in the second set, where he converted the decisive break point and then saved a later break point with supreme down-the-line backhand winners.

In the aftermath of his shock run to the Wimbledon semi-finals, Fery has managed himself well. He performed at a high level in Cincinnati, winning a round and then pushing Alex de Minaur, the world No 8, in two tight sets. Last week, he reached his first ATP final in Winston-Salem, providing more evidence that he belongs at this level.

He is yet to lose to any lower-ranked opponent. But the standard at the top of men's tennis is incredibly high and competing with players of Musetti's calibre will come with many more losses and lessons. It remains to be seen how much these lessons will enable him to improve.

For Musetti, this is a hopeful first performance as he tries to put himself back in contention for big titles after a torrid year. Musetti had started the season ranked No 5 and he was en route to a first Australian Open semi-final in Melbourne when he was forced to withdraw due to injury while leading Novak Djokovic. After a few months out, it has taken even longer for Musetti to rebuild confidence in his game and body. He is finally beginning to resemble his old self again.

Elsewhere, Elena Rybakina made a positive step forward in her pursuit of the No 1 ranking as she moved into the second round with a 6-3, 6-2 win over the 17-year-old American wildcard Thea Frodin.

There have been ample doubts surrounding Rybakina after she suffered a foot injury at the Cincinnati Open that forced her to retire from her quarter-final match against Iga Swiatek but she appeared comfortable on the court as she overpowered her inexperienced opponent.

Rybakina currently sits at No 1 in the live rankings and she would become the world No 1 for the first time in her career if she reaches the semi-finals or if Aryna Sabalenka, Jessica Pegula and Coco Gauff do not win the tournament.

In the men's draw, the fifth seed and French Open finalist Flavio Cobolli produced one of the best comebacks of his career to escape a tough battle with the Argentinian Francisco Comesaña, recovering from a two-set deficit to reach the second round with a 3-6, 2-6, 6-3, 6-4, 6-4 win.

Tsitsipas calls Kyrgios' cocaine ban 'expected'

Stefanos Tsitsipas says he is not surprised that Nick Kyrgios was suspended from tennis for taking cocaine. "Pretty much expected, to be honest," Tsitsipas said. "I am surprised it came so late, though."

Kyrgios tested positive for cocaine in June when he was playing at an ATP 250 event in Mallorca. In an Instagram post in August, the Australian said he had "made a huge mistake" and been given a provisional ban from tennis for the offence. He could be suspended for four years, though a lighter punishment is expected.

Tsitsipas was asked about Kyrgios after upsetting the No 10 seed, Arthur Fils, in the first round of the US Open. "I mean, to be entirely honest with you, I knew about this before the announcement. Myself, I knew about it," Tsitsipas said.

"So what can I tell you? I will just tell you the truth. I knew about all of this before any announcement was made, and when I saw it on social media, I was, like: 'Here we go.' I kind of expected it, to be honest."

Tsitsipas and Kyrgios played a fiery third-round match at Wimbledon in 2022, when Kyrgios reached his only grand slam final. Tsitsipas blasted a couple of shots at Kyrgios, intentionally hit a ball into the crowd and called Kyrgios a "bully". **Guardian sport**

Osaka's tribute to NBA star Iverson

Naomi Osaka channelled the former NBA player Allen Iverson before her 7-6, 7-6 win against Anastasia Zakharova. She entered the court in a long, white skirt and a grey, hooded robe featuring newspaper clippings about her and removed her hood to reveal cornrows under a headband – Iverson's signature look when he was the NBA MVP while with the Philadelphia 76ers. She also wore an arm sleeve, a look made popular by Iverson during his career. "It's my, I guess, my tribute to Iverson. I like him a lot," Osaka said. "Nike said basketball, so I said: 'OK, you want basketball, I'll give you basketball.'" Guardian sport

Cricket

Misbah resigns as selector amid Pakistan squad chaos

Simon Burnton

The former Pakistan captain Misbah-ul-Haq has resigned from the national selection committee after the decision on Monday to drop seven players and change coaches two-thirds of the way through the team's Test series against England.

It has emerged that after the Pakistan Cricket Board announced those decisions it contacted the selectors seeking explanations for some picks, including those of the opener Imam-ul-Haq, who having started the second game spent most of it off the field with a calf injury, and the wicketkeeper Mohammad Rizwan.

Rizwan is Pakistan's third-highest run-scorer of the past decade, was second in their scoring charts in 2024 and 2025, and Babar Azam is now the only Pakistani batter above him in the International Cricket Council Test rankings. But his keeping was criticised during the Lord's Test last week, and during the first game against Bangladesh in May – one of Pakistan's five defeats in six Tests this year – the Bangladesh wicketkeeper Litton Das was heard saying: "His reputation is bad in his country. If he tries to hit and gets out, he won't be able to enter his country."

The decision to overhaul the squad has been widely criticised in Pakistan. Shahid Afridi said he was "not sure what is the logic or reasoning behind the decision" and that "the replacements make no sense". Shoaib Malik, like Afridi a former Test captain, said: "Accountability should start with those who broke the system, not with players", adding that "such mental stress" would cause "the fear of failure [to] settle in the minds of our players".

Ben Stokes, meanwhile, has signed his first overseas deal since his international retirement, joining Adelaide Strikers in Australia's Big Bash League. The former England captain has made his first step back into the T20 franchise world by joining the Strikers in South Australia.

The 35-year-old all-rounder is available for the whole six-and-a-half-week tournament, which runs from mid-December to 26 January, and will reportedly earn around £260,000. England's tour of South Africa occupies the same spot in the calendar.

▲ *Misbah-ul-Haq quit after Pakistan axed several players during the series*

Grown-up Robinson can plot path towards Ashes redemption

England recall has gone astoundingly well but with tougher challenges to come he cannot afford to lose focus

Tanya Aldred

Last winter, Ollie Robinson and England were living separate lives on the same continent. To the cracking of crockery and gnashing of teeth, England played five Tests as Bazball imploded. Robinson, meanwhile, toddled off to play grade cricket for the University of Sydney with no thoughts of playing for England.

Eight months later, Robinson's life has turned upside down. After being dropped in 2024 over his attitude to fitness and suspicions of malingering, he was suddenly in favour again. In his first Test back in June he galumphed in from the Nursery End at Lord's and took three wickets in his first over, a nipped-back lbw, a nipped-back catch at short leg and then another lbw. Boy's Own stuff. He finished with seven wickets in the Test, and an award for player of the match.

After picking up a knee injury and missing the other Tests against New Zealand, he was back to face Pakistan and has pressed repeat. He has two more awards for player of the match in the two Tests against Pakistan and 16 wickets at an astonishing 7.18.

What happened in the intervening months? As always, probably lots of little things adding up to one big whole. In Australia he rediscovered his zest for cricket, and the perception is that he grew up a bit, got married and, perhaps belatedly, the penny dropped. He worked on his fitness, built up his stamina. The rest of it was always there - a metronomic ability to bowl the right length, and test the inside and outside edge. Then England changed, too.

The person who knows him better than anyone else is Paul Farbrace. The Sussex head coach, who is also Robinson's stepfather, said: "A lot of people ask what has changed, but I don't think he has changed enormously. Sometimes your stock goes up when you're not in the team. People suddenly decide you're better than they thought you were.

"I've been on the record saying there wasn't a great deal of interaction under Brendon McCullum and for the first time in the last few months Marcus North has been in touch to ask how to get the best out of Oliver. One thing that has never been in doubt is his skill level, but England decided they wanted bowlers over 85mph. Then the Ashes, with Alex Carey up to the stumps, proved that those who hit line and length consistently are always going to be difficult to play. The best players in the world are happy against pace but it is always difficult when there is a lot of bounce or nip.

"What Oliver has is a high level of skill, the highest release point in world cricket, an ability to hit the seam and move the ball both ways. He wanted to play for England again but we all thought that chance had gone. But he and I had a chat and I said if the coach changed he's got a chance and he realised it was now or never. The change of coach came at a good time for him. It won't have been so good for other people. That's the way the game works."

Giving him the Sussex captaincy at the start of the year also proved to be a shrewd move by Farbrace. "We have got the best out of him by making him captain. He has reacted very well to the responsibility and he has a very good cricketing brain. I said to him: 'I don't want you going off the field. I want you to play every game, stay on the field for every ball. If you have to come off to change your boots, fair enough but I'm not having you coming off and sitting down in the dressing room.' And fair enough, he's bowled in every game and stayed on the field and people began to notice that he was notching up games consistently."

And how should England handle him? "My advice to anyone with him is don't let him take his foot off the gas. Keep him on a reasonably tight leash and give him responsibility. They've talked to him about leading the attack and he enjoys that. You only get so many chances and this is his chance to be involved with next summer's Ashes. The Ashes didn't go that well for him last time so he's got a point to prove."

Before that there is another Test against Pakistan, then a tough winter with three Tests against South Africa and two against Bangladesh. There will be long third and fourth spells of toil in the hot sun. A chance for both England and Robinson to show how they've changed, while the bowler and his skills remain the same.

▶ *Ollie Robinson has the best Test average (19.53) for an England bowler in 67 years*
TOM JENKINS/ THE GUARDIAN

▼ *Maia Bouchier punished Ireland's attack to score her second ODI century*
ANDREW BOYERS/REUTERS

Women's first Metro Bank ODI

Bouchier ton powers England past Ireland in record chase

Raf Nicholson
Grace Road

A century from Maia Bouchier led England to a record women's one-day international run chase against Ireland at Grace Road yesterday, as they passed their target of 282 with six wickets and 71 balls to spare.

Bouchier missed out on selection for the T20 World Cup in June, but she remains a key part of England's ODI plans as they try to build a new team following the retirements of Heather Knight and Tammy Beaumont.

Bouchier initially played second fiddle to Sophia Dunkley, who smashed 73 from 61 balls. But when Dunkley drove a return catch to the leg-spinner Cara Murray, it was left to Bouchier to bring up the three-figure score which was there for the taking against a helpless-looking Irish attack.

"Obviously gutting that I missed out on the World Cup," Bouchier said. "But it was a really good way to play some more cricket [for Hampshire] and take the positives. There's a lot of opportunity next year which is exciting. If I can just put my name out there and score those big runs, I hope that will take care of itself."

England are contesting the three ODIs against Ireland without several key players - the regular captain Nat Sciver-Brunt remains injured, while Lauren Bell, Danni Wyatt-Hodge, Sophie Ecclestone, Amy Jones and Linsey Smith are being rested. The series thus provides an intriguing glimpse into the future, with the 21-year-old Jodi Grewcock batting at No 3 and the off-spinning all-rounder Mady Villiers making a white-ball return after two years in the wilderness.

Grewcock failed to shine, bowled through the gate by Murray for nine, while Bouchier holed out to long-on for 104. But Alice Capsey and Freya Kemp continued the momentum with a flurry of boundaries, ensuring England romped home.

The Ireland captain, Gaby Lewis, said: "It's very disappointing. You're battling against world-class players who took on the powerplay, and they put our bowlers off their lines and built that pressure for our bowlers and we struggled with our execution."

Earlier there were fifties for three Ireland players - Amy Hunter, Lewis and Rebecca Stokell - although Stokell's original celebrations proved premature when the umpires ruled that a boundary over fine leg had come off her helmet and counted as leg-byes. She was then given out lbw to England's stand-in captain, Charlie Dean, but had the decision overturned on review, allowing her to reach the milestone for real with 10 balls left of the innings.

There remain concerns about England's bowling depth. Without Bell and Ecclestone, England's attack - spearheaded by Issy Wong and Lauren Filer - lacked penetration, allowing Lewis and Hunter to stroll to a 136-run stand for the second wicket.

England also leaked 33 extras, including 20 wides - the second-most conceded by England in an ODI in the professional era. Capsey, keeping wicket for the first time in a full international in place of the rested Jones, took a brilliant one-handed diving grab to see off Alice Tector. On the other hand, might a more experienced keeper have prevented some of those wides?

There is an equation to be balanced between the number of runs saved by fielding the best keeper (Jones) against the number of runs gained by playing the more consistent batter (Capsey) - the head coach, Charlotte Edwards, will need to do the maths.

Scoreboard

Grace Road England beat Ireland by six wickets.

Ireland		Balls	4s	6s
A Tector c Capsey b Wong	**11**	14	2	0
***GH Lewis** b Wong	**69**	89	8	0
†A Hunter b Dean	**62**	90	5	0
OP Prendergast c Bouchier b Villiers	**19**	17	2	1
RK Stokell not out	**54**	48	7	0
L Paul b Dean	**29**	39	2	0
L Little not out	**4**	4	0	0
Extras (b4, lb8, nb1, w20)	**33**			
Total (for 5, 50 overs)	**281**			

Fall 13, 149, 172, 184, 268.
To bat AN Kelly, C Murray, JA Maguire, KJ McCartney.
Bowling Wong 10-0-57-2; Filer 10-0-37-0; Corteen-Coleman 7-0-53-0; Gibson 5-0-32-0; Dean 10-0-44-2; Villiers 8-0-46-1.

England		Balls	4s	6s
ME Bouchier c Prendergast b Kelly	**104**	95	11	0
SIR Dunkley c & b Murray	**73**	61	13	0
JL Grewcock b Murray	**9**	10	1	0
†AR Capsey not out	**41**	40	4	1
FG Kemp c Tector b Murray	**36**	22	7	0
DR Gibson not out	**1**	1	0	0
Extras (b6, lb3, w10)	**19**			
Total (for 4, 38 overs)	**283**			

Fall 143, 173, 223, 277. **To bat** *CE Dean, MK Villiers, IECM Wong, L Filer, MR Corteen-Coleman.
Bowling Prendergast 6-2-35-0; Maguire 6-0-54-0; Kelly 6-0-38-1; McCartney 6-0-47-0; Murray-9-0-58-3; Little 5-0-42-0.
Toss England elected to field.
Umpires WRP Dovey (Eng) and E Sheridan (Aus).

‘I was really scared to tell my old teammates I was going to Spurs’

While the move from Arsenal has been amicable, Victoria Pelova is now relishing the clash with her former club

Suzanne Wrack

There is not the same intensity to club rivalries between women’s teams as there is between their men’s counterparts, but as the game grows that is changing. Increasingly, there is animosity from fans if a player leaves for a rival side.

Victoria Pelova’s move from Arsenal to Tottenham firmly bucks the trend, though. Despite arguably having her best years ahead of her, the 27-year-old departed with a lot of well wishes and love.

“I was really scared to tell my old teammates that I was going here,” Pelova says. “My close friends knew about it, obviously, but everyone responded so well. Everyone tells me that it reflects on the person I am. So, I’m actually really glad about that.”

Pelova is eager for the WSL season to start

Pelova has been an Arsenal fan favourite despite limited minutes in her three years at the club, during which she was hampered by an anterior cruciate ligament injury sustained on international duty in June 2024. Why is she so liked? She comes across as fun and is loved by her teammates, with a wicked and dry sense of humour.

Pelova was not worried what people would make of her move to Spurs, but the Netherlands midfielder did think about it. Ultimately, it was “an easy decision” to join Martin Ho’s squad.

“The way Martin approached me, what he said about how he sees me as a player, the videos he showed me and how he wants me to be, I’ve never had a coach talking like that about me. So, for me, it was a good decision. I talked a lot with my mum about it and she immediately said yes. That was actually the most important thing for me, what my mum thought.”

At the start of June, Pelova shared online that her mum had died. A carousel of moving photos of the pair through the years was captioned: “Your biggest fear was leaving me behind. My biggest fear was losing you. Rest now, Mum.”

Pelova is not ready to talk about the loss, but it sits in the background of the interview. Not having to move home as a result of her leaving Arsenal was important. “It does really help me that I have friends and family around me that take care of me,” she says.

Reflecting on her spell at Arsenal, with her ACL injury coming at a time when it was believed she would start to get more playing time, she says: “There was a private situation going on, my mum was ill, and I didn’t get minutes. So, it was a really tough time and people didn’t know what I was going through.” The goal now? “To be happy again, in football and outside football, and just day by day see how it goes.

“It sounds like I have not been happy, but I have been happy in the last year and in being with my friends. But when you’re not playing as regularly as you want to it’s inevitable that you’re not going to be totally happy, and when I’m the happiest person, I will be the best footballer I can be.”

The fresh start at Tottenham has been rejuvenating. “It’s nice to have no one know you. For me, that’s the way to go. I don’t know if I can explain it, but I feel like when everyone knows you, they focus on the things they know.”

Ho made an instant impression on Pelova. “All the coaches I’ve met are always like: ‘Oh, you can play there and there and there.’ Martin was like: ‘You’re *this* for me.’ He knew exactly where he wanted me and what he wanted from me. That, right away, set the tone for me and it was where and how I see myself as well. What I’ve seen so far is that he’s so detailed. He just wants to make you better. He’s very strict, but he wants to make you a better player and that’s why I’m here.”

Victoria Pelova was won over by the Tottenham head coach, Martin Ho ALI PAINTER/WSL/GETTY IMAGES

‘You need to put us on as underdogs. The underdog position is the place to be’

Ho has “a lot” of confidence in her, and that is hugely freeing. “That’s the part I don’t have to worry about … and I can focus on other things.”

Pelova’s experience of Tottenham had been playing against them, and the more difficult that got, the more it contributed to her decision to join. “Defending was so hard,” she says of facing Spurs last season. “So, I already liked the style Martin had the team playing. I also already know Caitlin Dijkstra; I’ve known her for eight years and we lived together in Amsterdam so we know each other so well. She’s like my sister. I know Lize Kop, they’re also one of my closest friends. So, that has made the transition easy because I can always rely on them.

“I’m quite social so I’ve been trying to get to know everyone, the youngsters. It’s quite a hard job in the beginning, it’s intense, but I like it. On the pitch, you’re building relationships, pre-season is always heavy, you just need to grind, but it has been good.”

Pelova has belief in herself and her body, too. “We train *really* hard. That’s different to what I’m used to. So, obviously it goes up and down, but I’m confident that in a few weeks everything as a team will have progressed so much. Always with new players, it needs time. I’ve been in football a really long time so I know how it goes.”

Asked about Tottenham’s chances of disrupting things at the top, she flips the question, then says she relishes being outsiders. “You need to put us on as underdogs. The underdog position is the place to be.”

Now, Pelova is ready for the intensity of pre-season to end and for the games to begin at home against West Ham on Sunday. One, in particular, stands out, and it comes on 25 October at the Tottenham Hotspur Stadium. “Please, stop pre-season,” she says with a laugh. “I just want to start. I can’t wait to play against all the teams. I can’t wait to play against Arsenal.”

BBC defends axing flagship women’s football show

Tom Garry

BBC Sport insists it remains “fully committed to women’s football and the WSL” despite discontinuing BBC One highlights programme, the Women’s Football Show, for the new Women’s Super League season.

It is understood the BBC will focus on digital platforms to showcase highlights instead, including showing them on its new YouTube women’s football channel, instead of the weekly television show with a studio, presenter and pundits, which had aired on BBC One at 11.30pm on Sundays, after first going live on BBC iPlayer at 9pm.

The BBC is also understood to be planning a YouTube chatshow about women’s football, presented by Alex Scott, which multiple sources have said is expected to be in the “style of the Overlap”, Gary Neville’s football show. BBC Sport did not wish to comment when contacted about that plan specifically.

The decision to move away from the more traditional, linear television highlights show and focus on digital platforms appears to follow a similar strategy that was demonstrated this summer during the men’s World Cup, during which the BBC opted not to air a nightly highlights show for much of the tournament and instead drew in millions of viewers to its match-by-match highlights packages published online and on iPlayer.

A BBC spokesperson said: “BBC Sport remains fully committed to women’s football and the WSL. As we build towards the 2027 Fifa Women’s World Cup, audiences will be able to watch highlights from every WSL match across BBC platforms, including iPlayer, YouTube and the BBC Sport website and app.

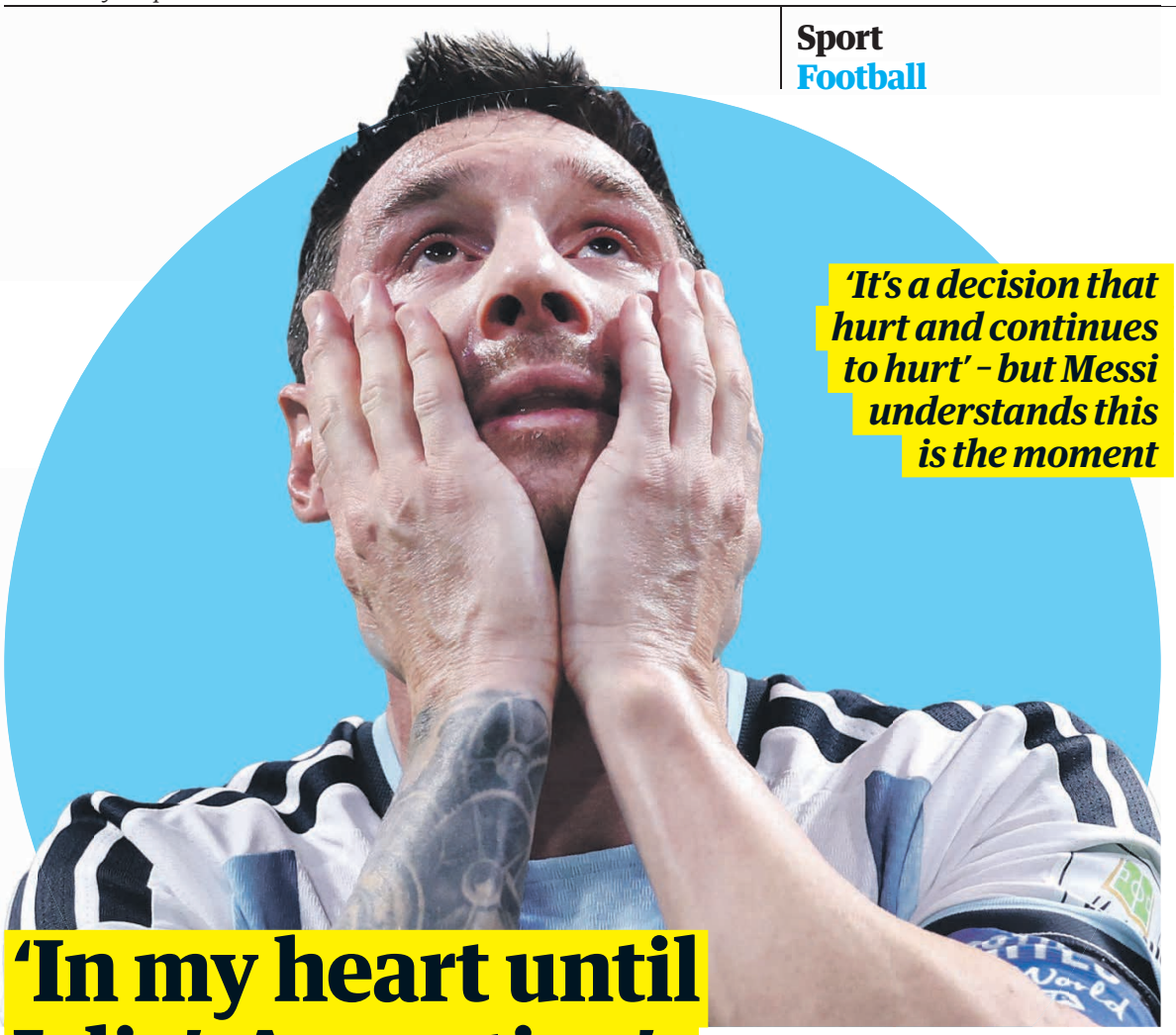
“In addition, BBC Sport will broadcast 25 live WSL matches, alongside live Uefa Women’s Champions League coverage, ensuring fans can follow the biggest stories and moments from the women’s game on free-to-air platforms.”

The BBC and Sky Sports are about to enter the second season of a five-year domestic rights deal that runs until 2030, with every game shown live and the vast majority by Sky Sports. Last year the BBC lost broadcast rights for the Women’s FA Cup to Channel 4 and TNT Sports, which will show the competition live in the UK and Republic of Ireland until 2028. This year the BBC also stopped airing Football Focus, which frequently showcased women’s football. Yesterday, however, BBC sources were adamant the broadcaster was not cutting back on women’s football coverage but evolving the way it delivers highlights in line with changing audience habits.

▲ *Alex Scott is in line to present a new show on the BBC’s YouTube channel*

Yet the Guardian understands the decision to axe the Women’s Football Show has disappointed several BBC Sport insiders. But WSL Football is understood to be comfortable with the assurances it has received from the BBC that it will be enhancing its coverage across its platforms. The new league season starts on Friday when the big-spending London City Lionesses host Manchester United.

The Women’s Football Show was co-funded by the BBC and the league. The production of the show is understood to have been funded by WSL Football – and previously, by the Football Association, when it oversaw the division prior to 2024 – while the BBC covered the cost of the on-screen talent.



'It's a decision that hurt and continues to hurt' – but Messi understands this is the moment

'In my heart until I die': Argentina's farewell to Messi

Decision to quit international football is met by a deluge of affection from the country he led to World Cup glory in 2022

Marcela Mora y Araujo

Anyone who was present at Lionel Scaloni's press conference immediately after the World Cup final between Spain and Argentina in New Jersey on 19 July and saw his tears, the sobs which prevented him from speaking while he got up and walked out, could tell this was a man weeping not because of defeat in a single match but because he was fully aware that what that particular group of men had been through for the past eight years had come to an end.

Messi's announcement that he is retiring from international football, posted on Instagram on Monday complete with photos of three handwritten sheets of some anonymous yet corporate-looking headed paper and a Harry Potter Time Turner pen, to the soundtrack of Brindis sung by Soledad Pastorutti, instantly dominated the news and unleashed a barrage of homages, gratitude and joy from all corners. But it's not exactly a surprise.

"How crazy that the day has come, dear Leo," Cristian Romero posted, making it clear that this was expected in spite of the unexpectedness. "The day no one wanted to arrive has arrived," echoed Giovani Lo Celso, who said he had "nine years listening to you, admiring you and learning by your side". His international teammates highlight how in their childhood they dreamed of meeting him one day, let alone actually playing with him. Nico Paz says since he was four years old he "used to watch you play with my dad and we would calculate together whether I would be in time to play with you".

It's not just his teammates who are expressing gratitude and nostalgia. On a Buenos Aires street corner someone put a red telephone on a table with a sign saying: "What would you say to Messi?" Passersby picked up the receiver and talked into it: "I'm 86 years old and you have given me the greatest joys in my life. You will be in my heart until the day I die," one gentleman said. A young boy saw the news and "burst into tears even though I was at school". A well-spoken woman said "we will miss you because you are an extraordinary being", a little girl added "you're the best and the greatest". An old man signed off "bye, son".

Influencers, journalists, artists, cultural commentators and psychologists all expressed their gratefulness for Messi being a great human being. "Messi led by example," the veteran sportswriter Matías Martin wrote, while the coach and motivational speaker Matias "Coco" Gallo Bevegni posted that the World Cup winner "taught me more in defeat than in victory".

The football pundit Morena Beltrán could not hold back the tears as she explained to her older colleagues that for her generation there is a sense of mourning and emptiness which can only be filled by gratitude, which maybe they have already experienced, because they have seen another God. The psychoanalyst Milagros Filgueras praised the decision to hand-write the note, saying some goodbyes need the body involved. The journalist Pablo Perantuono devoted his column to the "epistolary genre", noting that a handwritten letter in this day and age is almost a countercultural act of originality.

The writer Andrés Burgo highlighted that in 10 of the past 12 World Cups, either Maradona or Messi played, so this truly marks the "end of an era in which grandparents, parents, sons and daughters and grandchildren enjoyed an incredible privilege during almost 45 years. The heir will arrive – we hope – but right now is a time of orphanage. And gratitude."

Messi revealed that this letter was actually written two days after the final, a cathartic diary-like release, but that on Monday, after "[what happened with] my dad" he was more convinced than ever. The note said: "It's a decision that hurt and continues to hurt," but that he understands this is the moment. The poet Valeria Correa Fiz pointed out that he originally wrote "I think", crossed it out and replaced it with "I understand". Messi swore he always gave his all, not only these past few years when "everything was won" (he never says "I won"; it's always "we" or "it" was won) but he has nothing left to give. He's emptied.

The 39-year-old, however, scored four goals for Inter Miami at the weekend and continues his career at club level, where he clearly still has much to give. He is not retiring from playing football, the thing he loves most. He is retiring from Argentina.

With two international dates coming up and no rival agreed, no doubt the clarification that there will be no Messi in the squad will impact on the potential fixtures. And not unlike the time when he quit Argentina before, in 2016, the country's football is in a bit of turmoil.

The context and climate include scandals surrounding the Argentinian Football Association, the pressure by some lobbies to privatise football clubs, which are non-profit organisations, and the international furore caused by several incidents during the World Cup which have landed Argentina with some hefty fines, sanctions and suspensions.

The heaviness of the Argentina flag which for so many years visibly weighed him down, turned idyllic when it became the cloak of victory, mattered very much to his father, Jorge. Messi said he wanted to win another World Cup for him. Perhaps his death has somehow freed him from that aspect of his Argentinianness.

And just like last time, the spontaneous visceral response from the Argentinian people is acceptance and relish at the good times lived. That inexplicable sense of pride that comes from being from the same soil as someone who is very good at something and whose magic is still untarnished by the sordid final match against Spain, or any of the criticisms directed at the squad and fans throughout the tournament. If anything, his final tears in front of the stands, like Scaloni's tears at the press conference, are mirrored in a nation moved profoundly by the generations we have just lived through, perhaps not realising we were living through them.

The huge volume of emotive, sentimental outpouring is rather lovely, and amid it all an enduring image of three little boys walking down a Buenos Aires street with No 10 Messi shirts on their backs signals the way forward, towards a future unknown.

◀ *Lionel Messi is launched into the air by his Argentina teammates after a dramatic 3-2 win against Egypt during this summer's World Cup*
JUSTIN SETTERFIELD/ GETTY IMAGES

Football
In brief

Scotland

McTominay set for surgery on heart issue

Scott McTominay will miss Scotland's upcoming Nations League fixtures as he undergoes corrective surgery for a minor heart issue. Napoli said yesterday the midfielder is set for a short absence due to "a mild benign arrhythmia", which is an abnormal or irregular heart rhythm deemed non-serious and poses no significant risk to overall health. McTominay will miss his club's September fixtures, including the Champions League meeting with Arsenal next week, and will then sit out new head coach Sébastien Pocognoli's first four matches in charge of Scotland, against Slovenia (twice), Switzerland and North Macedonia. Scotland sent a message of support to McTominay, posting on the national team's official Instagram account: "Wishing you all the best in your recovery, Scott. Hope to see you back in a Scotland shirt soon." **Press Association**

Portsmouth

Tributes paid to 'legend' Knight after death at 65

The former Portsmouth goalkeeper and coach Alan Knight has died at the age of 65, the club has announced. Knight played 801 games for Pompey, the second-most appearances behind Jimmy Dickinson, after making his debut, aged 16, on the final day of the 1977-78 season. A club statement read: "The word legend is often overused in football, but the fact that Alan was still known as 'the legend' at Pompey more than 20 years after hanging up his gloves speaks volumes. He will be sadly missed by the Fratton faithful, teammates and all of us at the club who knew and loved him." Knight retired from playing in 2000 at the age of 38 and turned to coaching with Havant & Waterlooville before returning to Pompey in a coaching capacity. In 2004, the Portsmouth manager Harry Redknapp, short on keepers, put Knight on the bench for a Premier League game against Aston Villa. He had coaching spells in the US and England before returning to Fratton Park to work with the goalkeepers in 2013 and was later appointed a club ambassador. **Press Association**

Scott McTominay will miss Napoli's match with Arsenal next week

▼ *Divine Mukasa's spectacular strike gives West Ham the lead*
JUSTIN SETTERFIELD/GETTY IMAGES

Mukasa magic ends West Ham's wait for a win in Wolves thriller

West Ham 4
Mukasa 33 53, Bowen 42pen, Mavropanos 64

Wolves 2
Munetsi 44, Mavropanos 69og

Paul MacInnes
London Stadium

It was a match between two disjointed sides, two teams trying to carve out new identities following the drop into the Championship. In the end West Ham won thanks to a bit of luck, a degree of resolve and, crucially, a sharpness in front of goal that took them away from Wolves and reduced the pressure on Nuno Espírito Santo, for a few days at least.

First-half goals from Divine Mukasa and Jarrod Bowen, the latter from the penalty spot, were complemented by two more in the second; Mukasa secured his brace alongside a goal for Konstantinos Mavropanos. The defender doubled up himself too, albeit by scoring at his own end, as Wolves tried to claw their way back into contention. The visitors also added a decent goal from the midfielder Marshall Munetsi to their tally. For all their obvious technical ability, however, César Peixoto's side lacked the hosts' sang-froid at the crucial moments and that proved the decisive factor.

Nuno's mantra after the match was "I think we can do better", but he was clearly grateful for the win. "We all know that it was much needed," he said. "Looking back even on today, we have mistakes again but we've been much more effective in our attacking actions."

With West Ham's uncertainty extending beyond the field of play, there was much interest taken from the appearance of Amanda Staveley in the stands here. The former Newcastle shareholder remains in the running to acquire a stake in West Ham and could be seen punching the air at Mukasa's first-half banger. The Manchester City loanee was not the only new recruit to impress, with Arne Engels excellent alongside him in midfield.

What gave off the vibes of being an uninspiring opening half ended up being blessed by three goals. West Ham were on the back foot for much of the opening half-hour but established a two-goal lead by the 40th minute after a short spell of improved play. The opening goal was a memorable one, hit by Mukasa from 25 yards and cannoning into the net off the underside of the bar. It was a memorable way for the teenager to open his account, and it came after a piece of smart attacking play that got Kyle Walker-Peters behind Wolves' defensive line. Seven minutes later, Bowen converted a penalty after swift feet from Joel Piroe confused André into an untimely tackle.

Before Nuno could get his troops into the dressing room and preach the importance of a clean sheet, Wolves hit back. With West Ham's defence pushing up, a fortunate deflection off the previously bewildered André opened up the opportunity for Munetsi to run into space, check inside Mavropanos and finish inside Mads Hermansen's left-hand post.

▲ *Jarrod Bowen shows his delight after scoring West Ham's second goal*

With nascent enthusiasm tempered by the late concession, the atmosphere among the home support quietened as the second half began, perhaps in anticipation of further trials for West Ham. Instead they extended their lead in short order and it was Mukasa who struck again. This was a lovely move, starting with a cute through ball from Bowen that Pablo dummied to take four Wolves players out of the equation. Receiving on the edge of the box, Mukasa stood up Toti Gomes, shifted to his left and hit a shot that deflected off the Wolves skipper and beyond the despairing José Sá.

"I'm delighted by the way he played," Nuno said of Mukasa. "All the young lads, not just those who joined this summer, have brought us energy and talent. I'm delighted to have him."

Wolves responded to the third goal by grabbing hold of possession once more, but the sprightly Fer López spurned two chances. Up the other end, however, and an Engels corner was deep and dangerous and, after Mavropanos saw a towering header crash off the bar, the Greek defender smashed the rebound home on the volley. Six minutes after celebrating, Mavropanos got the final touch to a cross from Jackson Tchatchoua to turn the ball into his own net.

Wolves created no further chances, but could take solace from the performance of the full-back Tchatchoua, who looked impactful at both ends, while Mateus Mané was dominant on the left. "We created a lot of chances to score, they scored more goals," said Peixoto. "West Ham took their chances and that's the difference."

West Ham	Wolves
4-2-3-1	**4-2-3-1**
Hermansen; Walker-Peters (Veltman 56), Mavropanos, Kilman, Scarles; Mukasa● (Lamadrid 69), Engels; Bowen, Pablo (Kanté 69), Solomon (Austbø 79); Piroe (Castellanos● 56)	Sá; Tchatchoua, Djiga, Toti, H Bueno; Munetsi (Doyle 65), André; R Gomes (Armstrong 60), López, Mané (Chirewa 80); Jiménez (James● 65)
Subs not used	*Subs not used*
Herrick, Golambeckis, Mayers, Ajala	Virginia, S Bueno, Traoré, Lima, Krejci

Referee Lewis Smith

Results

Football

SKY BET CHAMPIONSHIP

	P	W	D	L	F	A	GD	Pts
Swansea	4	3	1	0	7	1	+6	10
Charlton	3	3	0	0	5	2	+3	9
Wolves	4	2	1	1	11	8	+3	7
QPR	3	2	1	0	5	2	+3	7
Bristol City	4	2	1	1	7	6	+1	7
Middlesbrough	3	2	0	1	6	4	+2	6
Millwall	3	2	0	1	6	5	+1	6
West Brom	3	2	0	1	6	5	+1	6
Birmingham	4	1	3	0	5	4	+1	6
Sheff Utd	4	1	3	0	5	4	+1	6
West Ham	4	1	2	1	8	7	+1	5
Blackburn	4	1	2	1	5	5	0	5
Watford	4	1	2	1	4	5	-1	5
Bolton	4	1	1	2	4	5	-1	4
Derby	4	1	1	2	5	7	-2	4
Lincoln	4	1	1	2	3	5	-2	4
Southampton	4	2	1	1	10	5	+5	3
Cardiff	3	0	3	0	5	5	0	3
Norwich	4	1	0	3	5	7	-2	3
Portsmouth	4	1	0	3	5	8	-3	3
Stoke	4	1	0	3	4	9	-5	3
Wrexham	3	0	2	1	3	4	-1	2
Burnley	3	0	1	2	4	9	-5	1
Preston	4	0	0	4	3	9	-6	0

Birmingham (0) 1
Priske 55
Southampton (1) 1
Schlotterbeck 45+3
25,007

Lincoln (0) 0
Blackburn (0) 0
10,267

Portsmouth (0) 0
20,282
Derby (1) 2
Szmodics 16, Salvesen 62

Preston (0) 1
Wiley 51
13,028
Bristol City (1) 3
Twine 4, Eissat 79
Ballard 86

Sheffield United (1) 3
Tanganga 4, Bamford 68
Donovan 90+3
Bolton (1) 2
Simons 1, Dalby 67
25,714

Stoke (1) 1
Galbraith 13
Norwich (0) 0
20,140

Swansea (2) 2
Eom 8, Idah 29
Watford (0) 0
16,195

West Ham (2) 4
Mukasa 33 53, Bowen 42pen
Mavropanos 64
Wolves (1) 2
Munetsi 44, Mavropanos 69og
59,113

SKY BET LEAGUE ONE

	P	W	D	L	F	A	GD	Pts
Huddersfield	4	3	1	0	9	3	+6	10
Sheff Wed	4	3	0	1	11	5	+6	9
Blackpool	3	2	1	0	7	2	+5	7
Cambridge Utd	4	2	1	1	7	6	+1	7
Stockport	3	2	0	1	9	4	+5	6
Leyton Orient	4	2	0	2	9	5	+4	6
Mansfield	3	2	0	1	8	5	+3	6
Notts County	4	1	3	0	6	5	+1	6
Bradford	4	2	0	2	4	4	0	6
Leicester	4	1	2	1	4	3	+1	5
Barnsley	3	1	1	1	3	2	+1	4
Burton	3	1	1	1	4	4	0	4
Oxford Utd	3	1	1	1	5	6	-1	4
Luton	3	1	1	1	8	10	-2	4
Plymouth	4	1	1	2	4	6	-2	4
AFC Wimbledon	3	1	1	1	1	3	-2	4
Peterborough	4	1	1	2	2	7	-5	4
Bromley	4	1	1	2	4	13	-9	4
MK Dons	3	0	3	0	3	3	0	3
Doncaster	4	0	3	1	4	5	-1	3
Stevenage	4	0	3	1	4	5	-1	3
Wycombe	4	0	2	2	4	9	-5	2
Reading	2	0	1	1	3	4	-1	1
Wigan	3	0	0	3	2	6	-4	0

Bradford (0) 1
Pointon 76
Cambridge United (0) 2
Kaikai 58, Knight 88

Bromley (0) 0
5,022
Leyton Orient (1) 5
Kabia 36 66
Akhamrich 46 51
Dobra 90+1

Doncaster (1) 1
Hutchinson 36
Notts County (0) 1
Cooper 64

Huddersfield (0) 3
Radulovic 56
Taylor 74 77
Oxford United (0) 1
O'Donkor 70

Leicester (2) 2
Alves 45+3, Howell 45+5
Plymouth (0) 0

Peterborough (0) 0
Stevenage (0) 0
6,565

Wycombe (1) 1
Woodrow 6
6,095
Sheffield Wednesday (2) 2
Barry 11
Lowe 45+8pen

Greg Wood's racing tips

Newcastle 1.45 Koko Blue 2.15 Dalamara 2.45 Yordan 3.15 Orne 3.45 Profitability 4.15 Flying Fletcher 4.45 Lady Bouquet 5.15 Book Of Life 5.45 Itzaboy
Bath 2.00 Etienne 2.30 Port Hedland 3.00 Sisters In The Sky 3.30 Call Time 4.00 Basilette 4.30 Buckland Belle (nb) 5.02 Asset 5.35 Belle Amie
Hamilton 4.50 Sod Hall Lane 5.20 Men Of Honour 5.50 Clocker 6.20 Harley (nap) 6.50 Mae Amor 7.20 Palmarian 7.50 Dubai Venture
Kempton 5.30 Superstorm 6.00 Abersoch 6.30 Al Widyan 7.00 Fortitudine 7.30 Zoustar Dreams 8.00 Blakefell 8.30 Madjid

SKY BET LEAGUE TWO

	P	W	D	L	F	A	GD	Pts
Bristol Rovers	4	3	0	1	11	6	+5	9
Barnet	4	2	2	0	9	5	+4	8
Walsall	4	2	2	0	8	4	+4	8
Crewe	4	2	2	0	4	2	+2	8
Oldham	4	2	1	1	7	3	+4	7
Cheltenham	4	2	1	1	8	7	+1	7
York	4	2	1	1	8	7	+1	7
Colchester	4	2	1	1	5	5	0	7
Swindon	4	2	1	1	5	5	0	7
Tranmere	4	1	3	0	7	5	+2	6
Grimsby	4	1	3	0	5	4	+1	6
Fleetwood	4	1	3	0	4	3	+1	6
Rotherham	4	1	2	1	6	6	0	5
Newport	4	1	1	2	9	9	0	4
Exeter	4	1	1	2	4	4	0	4
Chesterfield	4	1	1	2	3	4	-1	4
Crawley	4	1	1	2	3	5	-2	4
Northampton	4	0	3	1	2	3	-1	3
Rochdale	4	1	0	3	4	6	-2	3
Salford	4	1	0	3	3	6	-3	3
Gillingham	4	0	3	1	2	5	-3	3
Shrewsbury	4	1	0	3	2	8	-6	3
Accrington Stanley	4	0	2	2	6	9	-3	2
Port Vale	4	0	2	2	2	6	-4	2

Accrington Stanley (0) 2
Woods 45+7pen
Walton 60
Grimsby (2) 2
Anderson 6og, Cook 38
1,920

Bristol Rovers (1) 2
James 27, Harrison 90+3
Colchester (0) 0
7,663

Cheltenham (1) 3
Evans 17 65
McCann 86
York City (1) 2
Pearce 12, Malcolm 73
3,928

Chesterfield (1) 1
Koroma 22
Gillingham (0) 1
Hale 58
6,103

Crewe (0) 2
March 50
Hutchinson 90+2
Walsall (1) 2
Pressley 42pen 57
4,918

Exeter (0) 1
Cole 67
Barnet (0) 1
Kanu 60
4,826

Fleetwood (0) 1
Coughlan 88
Oldham (1) 1
Drummond 45
3,085

Northampton (1) 1
Opoku 38
Crawley (0) 1
Pereira 67
4,890

Rochdale (2) 3
Adeeko 33, Hannant 43
Smith 80
Shrewsbury (0) 0
3,241

Salford (0) 2
Allen 83
N'Mai 90
Newport (0) 1
Biggins 71
2,151

Swindon (1) 3
Drinan 13, Middlemas 71
Millard 90+4
Port Vale (1) 1
Lynch 2
6,609

Tranmere (1) 2
Okoro 16, Ince 87
6,137
Rotherham (0) 2
Nemane 84
Bradshaw 90+6pen

WOMEN'S CHAMPIONS LEAGUE QUALIFYING
Third round: Second leg Austria Wien 4 Brann 0 (agg 5-2)

ENTERPRISE NATIONAL LEAGUE
Halifax 1 Hartlepool 0

KDM EVOLUTION TROPHY
Stranraer 3 Celtic II 4

Tennis

US OPEN (Flushing Meadows, New York)

Men: Singles: First round: F COBOLLI (It, 5) bt F Comesana (Arg) 3-6 2-6 6-3 6-4 6-4; **T FRITZ** (US, 9) bt D Blanch (US) 6-3 6-2 6-4; **M Bellucci** (It) bt Z Piros (Hun) 6-4 6-2 6-0; **F CERUNDOLO** (Arg, 24) bt F Misolic (Aut) 6-4 6-3 7-5; **D Sweeny** (Aus) bt C Moutet (Fr) 7-6 (4) 6-4 3-0 ret; **J-L Struff** (Ger) bt C Ugo Carabelli (Arg) 6-4 6-3 6-3; **T Schoolkate** (Aus) bt N Basavareddy (US) 7-6 (4) 3-6 6-3 6-4; **L MUSETTI** (It, 13) bt A Fery (GB) 6-3 6-3 7-5

Women: Singles: First round: M KEYS (US, 22) bt A Korneeva (Rus) 7-5 6-4; **E Lys** (Ger) bt G Knutson (Cz) 6-3 6-3; **E RYBAKINA** (Kaz, 2) bt T Frodin (US) 6-3 6-2; **Y Starodubtseva** (Ukr) bt E Seidel (Ger) 6-2 6-2; **A Bondar** (Hun) bt L Havlickova (Cz) 6-3 6-3; **M ANDREEVA** (Rus, 5) bt J Tjen (Ino) 6-2 6-2; **M SAKKARI** (Gre, 32) bt R Montgomery (US) 2-6 7-5 6-2; **Y Putintseva** (Kaz) bt B BENCIC (Swi, 12) 4-6 7-5 6-3; **E MERTENS** (Bel, 23) K Quevedo (Sp) 6-4 6-4

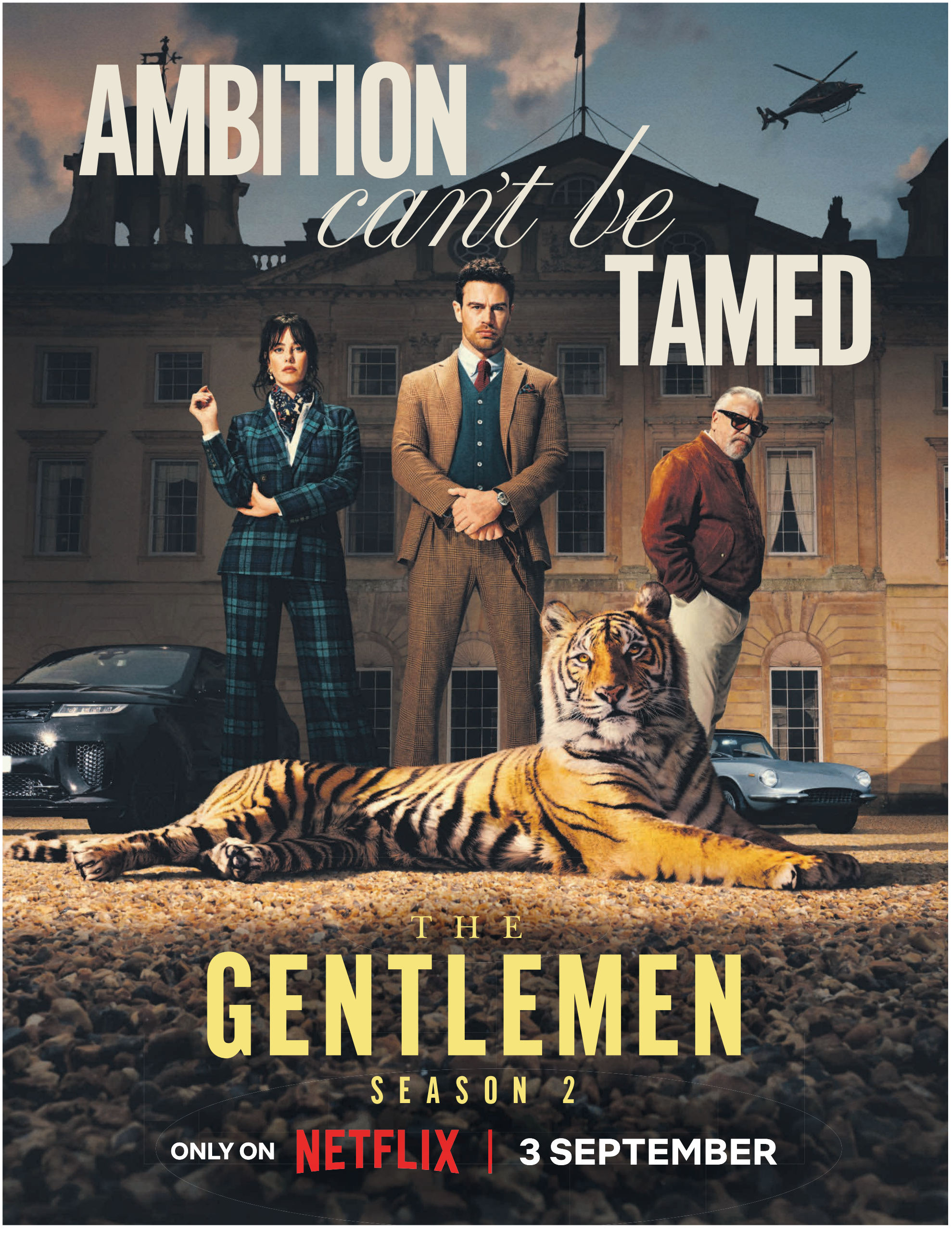
Cricket

FIRST WOMEN'S ONE-DAY INTERNATIONAL
Grace Road Ireland 281-5 (GH Lewis 69, A Hunter 62, R Stokell 54). England 283-4 (ME Bouchier 104, SIR Dunkley 73). England beat Ireland by six wickets.

MEN'S INTERNATIONAL TWENTY20
Windhoek South Africa 185-7 (LG Pretorius 94). Zimbabwe 142 (BC Fortuin 4-24). South Africa beat Zimbabwe by 43 runs.

Fixtures

Football (7.45pm unless stated)
Women's Champions League
Third qualifying round: Second leg Inter (0) v Wolfsburg (2) (5.30pm); Juventus (3) v St Pölten (0) (7.30pm); Køge (1) v PSV (0) (6pm); OH Leuven (4) v Czarni Sosnowiec (1) (7pm); PSG (1) v Eintracht Frankfurt (1) (5.30pm); Real Madrid (2) v Ajax (0) (7pm); Real Sociedad (2) v Chelsea (5) (6pm); Servette Chênois (2) v Sparta Praha (3) (5.45pm)
William Hill Scottish Premiership
Celtic v Aberdeen; Dundee v St Johnstone; Falkirk v Rangers (8pm); Kilmarnock v St Mirren; Motherwell v Dundee United
Sky Bet Championship
Burnley v Middlesbrough (8pm); Millwall v Wrexham; QPR v Cardiff; West Brom v Charlton
Sky Bet League One
Barnsley v Blackpool; Burton v AFC Wimbledon; Luton v Stockport; Reading v Mansfield (8pm); Wigan v MK Dons
Cricket (10.30am unless stated)
Rothesay County Championship
Division One Essex v Sussex, Chelmsford; Hampshire v Warks, Utilita Bowl; Notts v Leics, Trent Bridge; Somerset v Glamorgan, Taunton; Surrey v Yorkshire, The Kia Oval
Division Two Gloucestershire v Derbyshire, Bristol; Kent v Worcestershire, Canterbury; Middlesex v Lancashire, Northwood; Northamptonshire v Durham, Northampton


AMBITION
can't be
TAMED
THE
GENTLEMEN
SEASON 2
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Newcastle sign top target Fernandez-Pardo for £51m after transfer 'twists and turns'

Louise Taylor

Newcastle concluded a "transformational" transfer window by securing the target that topped their shopping list in May with only hours of the transfer window remaining.

The £51m signing of the Belgium forward Matias Fernandez-Pardo from Lille on deadline day is regarded as a considerable coup and prompted boardroom celebration at the end of a turbulent summer. The 21-year-old is Newcastle's eighth signing of a transfer window that has also seen Eddie Howe replaced as manager by Matthias Jaissle and three of the team's biggest names – Anthony Gordon, Sandro Tonali and Bruno Guimarães – sold for a total approaching £250m.

Ross Wilson, Newcastle's sporting director, kept in frequent contact with Fernandez-Pardo's advisers. "Matias is a strong example of how a transfer window can unfold with twists and turns along the way," Wilson said. "Back in May he was our top target and we always remained engaged with him. Now at the end of the window he becomes our eighth addition to a refreshed Newcastle United and we are excited to welcome him."

Fernandez-Pardo's movement and ability to operate as a No 10, a No 9 or wide-left attacker explains why Newcastle were prepared to stay patient for his signature. "A lot of hours went into this one," Wilson said. "But we're clear on our identity and Matias has speed, intensity and work rate in abundance. Our fans will enjoy him and I know he will also enjoy our amazing St James' Park atmosphere."

Jaissle seemed equally delighted to have reinforced his frontline with a versatile attacker. "We were all delighted when we knew we could complete this deal," said the German, who has made three key signings in Amar Dedic for about £30m, the £52m Nico González and now Fernandez-Pardo since arriving on Tyneside in early August. "Matias is a highly technical player with explosiveness in his game. He can score and assist, he has courage and the ability to take players on. We're sure our supporters will enjoy watching him play."

"I'm really happy to be here and very proud to be at such a big club," the Belgian said. "I spoke to the head coach and he really showed me how much he wanted me to be here. In terms of my career progression it made complete sense to come; I didn't hesitate at all. I can't wait to start my wonderful adventure here."

Nick Woltemade's failure to fit into Jaissle's high-intensity gameplans explains why, after he signed for £70m from Stuttgart last August, he joined Juventus on a year-long loan.

▼ *Matias Fernandez-Pardo is Newcastle's eighth summer signing*
JEAN-FRANÇOIS BADIAS/AP

Villa splash out £72m on Mbaye and Harwood-Bellis

Ben Fisher

Aston Villa completed the signings of Ibrahim Mbaye and Taylor Harwood-Bellis on deadline day, with Unai Emery confident the club's summer overhaul has left the club in position to replicate their recent success.

Villa, who have lost both of their Premier League games this campaign, have qualified for the Champions League in two of the past three seasons and won their first major trophy in 30 years after lifting the Europa League.

The £47m arrival of the 18-year-old winger Mbaye from Paris Saint-Germain and a £25m deal for Harwood-Bellis from Southampton represented Villa's ninth and 10th summer signings respectively. Villa had generated more than £300m from the sales of nine players, six of whom started in the Europa League triumph in Istanbul in May; Morgan Rogers, Ollie Watkins, Ezri Konsa, Youri Tielemans, Lucas Digne and Emiliano Martínez all departed Villa Park in recent weeks, Rogers and Martínez joining Chelsea.

Watkins's £50m exit to the Saudi Pro League club Al-Hilal, after rejecting Villa's offer of a new contract, led to Villa signing Nicolas Jackson for an initial £47.5m that could rise to a club-record £65m. Earlier in the window, Villa signed Johan Manzambi for a club-record £52m from Freiburg but the Switzerland midfielder is yet to make his debut as he continues his recovery from a knee injury he sustained at the World Cup.

After the 1-0 home defeat by Arsenal on Monday, Emery struck an upbeat tone. "We are happy how we are closing the transfer window," the Villa manager said. "We are not regretting anything and the players who are joining are players that should be enough to rebuild the team with the structure we want. I think we replaced the players as we planned."

Zion Suzuki, a £30m arrival from Parma, made his Villa debut against Arsenal and Villa's new No 1 accepts the task of replacing Martínez is a "good challenge". The 24-year-old, who joined Villa after a move to PSG collapsed in the final stages, said: "It was my priority to play games so that is why I made the decision and I played in Belgium for one year, in Parma for two years. In the end I am here and playing for Villa. I just wanted to come here for this club.

"There are so many expectations. It is not easy to play after [Martínez] but I want to help the team and be like him. It was important to play in Serie A for two years. I made good steps and now I am here to play for the club. I want to enjoy this moment and help the team. I am looking forward to [playing in] the Champions League but before that I want a first Premier League win to get some momentum."

▲ *The 18-year-old Ibrahim Mbaye cost £47m from Paris Saint-Germain*

Mudryk in from the cold as Spurs sign winger on loan

David Hytner

Tottenham have thrown a Premier League lifeline to the forgotten Chelsea winger, Mykhailo Mudryk, signing him on loan just before the transfer deadline and challenging him to revive his career.

Mudryk became a €100m (£89m) player when Chelsea took him from Shakhtar Donetsk in January 2023; the deal comprised an initial €70m and €30m in add-ons. Chelsea beat Arsenal to his signature at a point when the Ukrainian was among the most in-demand players in Europe.

The move to Chelsea did not work out and Mudryk hit rock bottom when he was banned for returning an adverse reading for the banned substance, meldonium, which can increase respiratory capacity and stamina. His last competitive game for Chelsea was on 28 November 2024.

Mudryk was suspended before being given a four-year ban by the Football Association. But after an appeal to the court of arbitration for sport, he was able to resolve his case with the FA at the end of July, being cleared for an immediate return to playing. He accepted breaking anti-doping rules and agreed to a suspension that was equal to the time he had already served. The FA noted that changes have been made to the World Anti-Doping Agency's rules on meldonium and had Mudryk's test been conducted today then "the concentration of meldonium in the sample would not have been reported" and no adverse finding would have been recorded.

Spurs have taken a punt on Mudryk on the recommendation of their manager, Roberto De Zerbi, who worked productively with the 25-year-old at Shakhtar, overseeing his breakthrough season in 2021-22. De Zerbi was in the market for a left winger to complete a new-look front line with the right-sided attacker Sávio and the central striker Omar Marmoush; both have joined from Manchester City.

Spurs failed with moves for Cody Gakpo and Iliman Ndiaye. And so De Zerbi pivoted to Mudryk. The deal for him has a £75m purchase option.

"It's a great feeling. I'm so excited to be reunited with Roberto De Zerbi," said Mudryk. "He's my football father. I believe in him. I trust him."

Spurs added another Chelsea player on deadline day with the centre-half Tosin Adarabioyo signing for £7m. They also moved Pape Sarr to Juventus on an initial loan with a buy option.

▲ *Mykhailo Mudryk last played for Chelsea in November 2024*

Sunderland pip Palace in dogfight to land Fofana

Louise Taylor

Sunderland and Crystal Palace were involved in an extraordinary deadline-day tug of war that concluded with Malick Fofana agreeing to swap Lyon for the Stadium of Light in a club-record £31m move.

Yesterday morning it had seemed the 21-year-old Belgium winger was heading for Sunderland on a five-year contract, but then Pierre Sage led an attempt to hijack the deal. Palace's manager coached Fofana at Lyon and forged a strong bond with him. After speaking to Sage on the phone, Fofana seemed to have decided he wanted to reunite with his old boss in south London. Sunderland, though, refused to surrender.

That meant Lyon had a bidding war on their hands and responded by agreeing improved deals with both clubs. Meanwhile, two private jets, one dispatched by Sunderland and the other by Palace, sat on the tarmac at Lyon airport. At one point Fofana was said to have been seen boarding the former aircraft before a flight to Newcastle but, in reality, he was headed for a medical commissioned jointly by Palace and Sunderland. With time running out, both accepted this unusual arrangement was the only way he would be heading to England.

In an attempt to remind Fofana why he had been so excited about playing for Régis Le Bris, Kyril Louis-Dreyfus, Sunderland's owner, flew to Lyon and spoke to him privately. It appears to have proved an inspired intervention as, shortly after 9pm, Fofana announced he would be travelling to the Stadium of Light after all.

The initial fee is £26m, but add-ons dictate it should rise to £31m. That leaves a forward capped five times by Belgium set to become Sunderland's record signing, eclipsing the £30m paid to Strasbourg for midfielder Habib Diarra last summer. Sunderland submitted a deal sheet and expect it to be concluded shortly.

▲ *Sunderland and Palace courted Malick Fofana by way of private jet*

▼ *Gabriel Jesus is unveiled by Barcelona after leaving Arsenal*

JAVIER BORREGO/AFP7/SHUTTERSTOCK

Deadline-day deals

Jesus makes £8.6m switch to Barcelona

Brazil striker leaves England for Spain after winning Premier League title with two clubs

Barcelona confirmed that Gabriel Jesus joined from **Arsenal** on a permanent basis for a fee that is thought to be £8.6m. The Brazil striker was in attendance for Barça's 5-2 win over Rayo Vallecano on Monday night after a deal was struck over the weekend. Arsenal also sold Fábio Vieira to **Hamburg** on a permanent basis for around £8.7m. The Portuguese midfielder spent last season on loan at the German club. **Borussia Dortmund** agreed a deal to sign Ethan Nwaneri on loan from Arsenal. The teenager is hoping to get regular playing time in Germany. **Crystal Palace** confirmed the signing of Honest Ahanor on loan from **Atalanta** after the teenage defender's move to **Chelsea** was completed. He will join them next year for £40m after spending the season at Selhurst Park. Ben Chilwell, who spent the second half of the 2024-25 campaign on loan at Palace, rejoined the club from **Strasbourg** on a free transfer. Meanwhile, **Fulham** went back to **Real Madrid** again to sign Manuel Ángel for £3m and brought in **Eintracht Frankfurt**'s Hugo Larsson on loan. **Ed Aarons and Jacob Steinberg**

Valencia get Elliott and Beto joins Fiorentina

The **Liverpool** midfielder Harvey Elliott has joined La Liga side **Valencia** for the season. The 23-year-old's latest loan move contains no obligation for the Spanish club to buy next summer. Liverpool also confirmed a deal for **Genk**'s teenage goalkeeper Lucca Brughmans, with the 18-year-old due to arrive at Anfield next summer for a fee that could rise to £30m with add-ons. He has

Harvey Elliott's loan to Valencia does not include an obligation to buy

agreed a six-year deal and will remain at the Belgian club on loan for the rest of this season. Beto sealed a £15.5m move from **Everton** to **Fiorentina** and the Merseyside club thanked him for "his dedication, commitment and service". Nathan Patterson completed a permanent move from Everton to **Torino**, becoming the second player from the club to move to Italy on deadline day. Everton will receive a modest sum for the Scotland international, plus a sell-on fee. Tim Iroegbunam joined **Hull** for an undisclosed fee, believed to be £15m plus £7m in add-ons, with Aston Villa receiving a sell-on sum as part of the deal that took the midfielder to Everton in 2024. **Andy Hunter**

Abbott and Kitching head for second tier

Zach Abbott has signed a new four-year contract with **Nottingham Forest** and joined **Southampton** until the end of the season. The 20-year-old academy graduate, who joined the club aged 11, made his top-flight debut last season and featured seven times as Forest reached the Europa League semi-finals. Forest also allowed the centre-back Morato to head to **West Ham** on loan. **Coventry** allowed Liam Kitching to join **Sheffield United** on loan for the season. The 26-year-old defender was a regular en route to promotion as champions last campaign, but has fallen down the pecking order following the arrivals of Aurèle Amenda, Ethan Pinnock and Stephen Mfuni. **Ben Fisher**

▲ *Ilyas Ansah has signed a five-year deal after his £21m move to Hull*

Hull splash out to bring in £21m Ansah

Hull added another signing in the form of Ilyas Ansah from **Union Berlin**. The forward cost the Tigers £21m and he signed a five-year deal with the club. "I'm very excited," Ansah said. "It's a dream come true for me to play in the Premier League - it's really an honour for me. I'm excited to play with the boys and to get to know them." Liam Millar later left for **Birmingham** on loan, just a few days after scoring the winner at Coventry. The 26-year-old signed for Hull from Basel in 2024, making 53 appearances and helping them secure promotion via the playoffs last season. Brooke Norton-Cuffy joined from **Genoa** in a deal worth £12m, with Cody Drameh heading in the opposite direction as a £3.4m makeweight, and the 19-year-old French striker Robinio Vaz joined from Roma on a season-long loan with an option to buy. **Guardian sport**

Gnonto leaves Leeds while Bard comes in

The **Leeds** forward Wilfried Gnonto joined **Fiorentina** on a season-long loan deal. Gnonto moved to Leeds on deadline day four years ago and went on to make 147 appearances in all competitions for the club, scoring 23 times. The 22-year-old, capped 13 times by Italy and the country's youngest-ever goalscorer, made 29 appearances last season, although he started just four times in the top flight. Daniel Farke's side brought in the **Nice** left-back Melvin Bard for an undisclosed fee just before the transfer window closed. The club also appeared to have agreed a deal with **Eintracht Frankfurt** to sign Jean-Mattéo Bahoya on an initial loan, with an option to make the France Under-21 forward's move permanent for around £26m. **Guardian sport**

Late deals for Zirkzee and Aït-Nouri fail

Manchester United made a late enquiry about **Manchester City**'s left-back Rayan Aït-Nouri. The 25-year-old was offered to United by his camp a few days ago and the club contacted City yesterday afternoon, but were told only a loan with an obligation to buy was possible, which United baulked at. **Everton** offered £10m to loan the forward Joshua Zirkzee for the season but the Old Trafford club felt this was too low. **Jamie Jackson**

Sport

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Why I moved from Arsenal to Tottenham

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Here's to you, Mr Robinson
Tanya Aldred on the seam bowler's revival

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Enzo Fernández (right) will be reunited with Enzo Maresca at Manchester City
MARK PAIN/ ALAMY LIVE NEWS

Enzo gets Enzo
Fernández makes City move in record-equalling £125m deal

Jacob Steinberg

Manchester City have equalled the British transfer record with a £125m deal to sign Enzo Fernández from Chelsea, who were left raging after their attempts to replace the Argentina midfielder were dashed by Monaco reneging on an agreement to sell Lamine Camara last night.

On a day of twists and turns, City emerged in a strong position after they bolstered their attack by signing Iliman Ndiaye from Everton for up to £65m and landed one of Enzo Maresca's biggest targets on a five-year deal. Chelsea held out for a huge fee for Fernández and it seemed they were going to find a replacement for him as the transfer window closed.

The club moved to agree a £47m fee with Monaco for Camara, who was set to sign a six-year contract with the option of an extra year. Chelsea swooped when Everton's attempts to sign the USA striker Folarin Balogun ran into difficulties. It left Monaco needing to raise funds from elsewhere, prompting Chelsea to revive their move for Camara after having a £38.1m offer for the Senegal midfielder rejected earlier in the day.

Chelsea had a written agreement with Monaco but were stunned by the Ligue 1 club pulling out of the deal as the deadline approached. Sources called Monaco's conduct "deeply unprofessional". As an extraordinary situation developed it emerged that Everton, who have also loaned Jack Grealish from City, had refused to give up on Balogun, renegotiated the fee for the former Arsenal forward and submitting a deal sheet for his signature.

The collapse of Camara's move did not lead to Chelsea cancelling the sale of Fernández to City. The deal means City have spent £327m on midfielders this summer.

"I could not be happier to be here, and I am ready for the challenge of helping City continue winning trophies. This is a club built for success," said Fernández, who becomes this country's most expensive player alongside Alexander Isak, who joined Liverpool from Newcastle for £125m a year ago.

Enzo Maresca has a good relationship with Fernández after coaching him at Chelsea and a reunion has been on the cards for a while. City opened talks with Chelsea on Monday night and will feel they have successfully rebuilt their midfield after selling Rodri to Barcelona and losing Bernardo Silva to Real Madrid, while also selling Nico González to Newcastle.

Deadline-day moves *Pages 42-43 →*

Hussey snubs England in Ashes boost for Australia

Exclusive
Matt Hughes

Michael Hussey has rejected the chance to become England's Test batting coach in favour of a part-time deal with Cricket Australia.

The former Australia batter held talks last month with Stephen Fleming, England's new Test head coach, about joining his backroom team but is understood to have opted to stay in Australia in a boost for Pat Cummins's side before the Ashes next year.

Hussey is believed to have accepted Cricket Australia's offer of a consultancy role as it gives him the flexibility to continue existing commitments, such as coaching in the Hundred and other franchise tournaments, as well as punditry work for Fox Sports. The 51-year-old was Welsh Fire's head coach in the Hundred this year and has worked as a batting coach for Chennai Super Kings in the Indian Premier League.

Fleming worked closely with Hussey during 18 years at CSK as a player and coach which ended this year, but he has been unable to persuade him to join England.

Hussey coached England on a part-time consultant contract during their victorious T20 World Cup campaign in 2022, but a full-time role as Test batting coach would have been far more onerous given this winter features tours to South Africa, Bangladesh and Australia before the home Ashes series next summer.

Fleming will be permitted to continue searching for a batting coach, although the England and Wales Cricket Board may opt to retain Marcus Trescothick, who has impressed in a caretaker role in the current Test series against Pakistan.

If Trescothick stays with the Test team the ECB could opt to appoint a new head of batting coaching across all their development teams.

Cricket Australia and the ECB declined to comment.

▲ *Michael Hussey can continue with other commitments in his new job*

Burnham has lost his nerve on big money donors *George Monbiot, page 3*

We MOT our cars every year. Why not our bodies too? *Devi Sridhar, page 4*

Edouard Balladur, former French prime minister *Obituaries, page 6*

G2 Daily pullout life & arts section *Inside*

The Guardian Wednesday 2 September 2026

Journal

Opinion and ideas

Big ambitions need space. That's scarce in Westminster

Rafael Behr

Nothing stays fresh for long in parliament and no one sounds normal. The air, thick with convention, suffocates originality, tuning every voice to the same Westminster pitch. The need to escape that climate is one reason why Andy Burnham quit his Commons seat to run for mayor of Greater Manchester. Or that is how he tells the story.

Returning after nearly a decade away, the prime minister says he wants to throw open the windows, let in some air. He thinks devolution can cultivate a healthier political culture. He intends to rebalance England's centre of gravity with a power base in the new No 10 North.

The timing of Burnham's arrival in Downing Street, just before the summer recess, suited those arguments. He replaced Keir Starmer, then promptly went on tour, posting chatty videos on social media, appearing as the antidote to a stuffy predecessor who, perhaps unfairly, had come to be seen as the archetypal Westminster mechanoid. Starmer, who on Tuesday announced his intention to stand down as an MP, may find his authentic voice on the outside.

Meanwhile, Burnham has to bring his free-range prime minister act into the battery farm of the Commons. His mandate and legislative programme are inherited from the Starmer era. He is stuck with the same squeezed budgets in the same sluggish economy imperilled by the same turbulent global climate. His room for fiscal manoeuvre is constrained by Labour's 2024 manifesto prohibition on broad-based tax rises and by the bond market's punitive vigilance towards anything that looks like undisciplined spending.

In such conditions, politics is reduced to a zero-sum competition for scarce resources. Every promise made to satisfy the needs of one department or constituency contains an undeclared threat to deprive someone else.

Starmer's leadership was ruined by many things, but few were as crippling as his failure to grapple with those dilemmas. He wouldn't pick sides between irreconcilable demands within his cabinet. When his own ministers couldn't read his political instincts or decrypt his priorities, the public had no chance.

Determination not to repeat that mistake has shaped Burnham's approach from his first moments in office. He declared a moral mission – the elimination of rough sleeping – before even crossing the threshold of No 10. He

Prime minister Andy Burnham leaves 10 Downing Street yesterday

PHOTOGRAPH: RASID NECATI ASLIM/ ANADOLU VIA GETTY IMAGES

Big ambitions need space. That's scarce in Westminster

Rafael Behr

← Continued from front

followed it up with emblematic policies to demonstrate that regime change brought a new focus on the cost of living. No one in Downing Street pretends that capping bus fares or cutting VAT on fuel bills is enough to win affection from a sceptical public. The function of such policies is to show that Labour, renewed by fresh leadership, has snapped out of despondency and started listening. A bounce in opinion polls suggests it is working.

But the transition from small-change symbols to big-ticket policy choices is not easy. The learning curve for any new prime minister is brutally steep. The road is especially hard to navigate for those who arrive midterm, scrambling over unfinished and unpopular business bequeathed by an ousted predecessor.

The retreat from plans to free up prison capacity by releasing offenders early is a revealing case. Burnham understandably doesn't want his first months in office marred by a parade of stories about villains walking free. But swerving unfriendly headlines isn't a plan for reforming the justice system or growing its budget.

Likewise, the prime minister's appearance in Kyiv to celebrate Ukraine's independence day, while important as a display of solidarity with Volodymyr Zelenskyy, came with no account of the sacrifices Britain faces as the price of ramping up its own defences against Russian aggression. No one is better briefed on that challenge than the chancellor. As defence secretary, John Healey resigned from Starmer's government in protest at the former prime minister's reluctance to boost military spending. Relocated to the Treasury, he finds himself managing a downgrade in rearmament expectations ahead of the autumn budget.

The return to parliament threatens a narrowing of Burnham's options. The prime minister has a theory to counter that threat. His argument is that devolution, as well as bringing fresh air, spurs economic growth.

Loosening the dead hand of Whitehall control over public services is supposed to promote innovation and efficiency. A more responsive government, attuned to local market conditions, will unlock investment. Assuming that can work, the mechanism is slow. Burnham accepts that it is a 10-year plan. The opposition calculates that the fiscal walls will close in on Labour a lot faster than that. Kemi Badenoch thinks the economy is the issue that will rehabilitate Tory fortunes. To sharpen her attack on that front, she has sacked her shadow chancellor, Mel Stride. His replacement, Andrew Griffith, is deemed more dynamic, a quality he once displayed in cheerleading for Liz Truss's disastrous 2022 "mini-budget".

In Badenoch's view, Burnham is a "people-pleaser" who lacks the resolve to whip his MPs behind tough budget choices. He will rely on tax rises to pay for policies that the left see as essential maintenance to the social safety net and the right decry as profligate subsidy for fecklessness. The impossibility of feeding Labour's big-government appetite with hands shackled by the 2024 manifesto will force the prime minister to seek his own mandate with an early election.

It is a plausible scenario. It is also unclear how the Tories get match fit on that timetable when they are running third in national polls. Badenoch's personal ratings aren't so bad, but she lacks insight into the reasons why so many voters think her party is unfit to govern. Discounting Griffith's contamination by the Truss project when appointing a shadow chancellor is a symptom of that blind spot.

The Tories are flattered into feeling relevant by a sympathetic press and the constitutional crutch of official opposition status. In parliamentary arithmetic, the Conservatives still eclipse Reform UK.

Badenoch welcomes the enclosure of politics in the Commons chamber: the theatre of ritual combat is more her style than Burnham's. But his judgment is better in thinking voters are turned off by the whole spectacle. His fresh manner has breathed life into a government that was expiring. It will take a different order of political skill to dispel the older miasma of cumulative failure that hangs heavy over Westminster.

The Guardian

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'Comment is free... but facts are sacred' CP Scott

Bond markets

Japan shows Burnham why economic independence will come at a high price

"In the midst of every crisis lies great opportunity" is an aphorism attributed to Albert Einstein. It seems to be taken to heart by this White House. A global bond sell-off sparked by an inflationary shock emanating from the Gulf sees Donald Trump seeking to restrict plans by Japan – a longtime ally – to reduce dependence on an international system America dominates.

Japan, a successful exporter, has long done things its own way. For years Tokyo saw off the bond vigilantes despite running enormous deficits and a huge national debt. It demonstrated how a central bank could fund public spending and keep interest rates low if it wanted to. This economic model was refined by Shinzo Abe, Japan's longest-serving prime minister. However, this week the US treasury secretary, Scott Bessent, called time on Abenomics as his price for US help in stabilising Japan's currency. Japan's Sanae Takaichi, he indicated, should shrink her $2tn spending plans and raise rates. Abenomics did not suddenly become financially impossible. It became inconvenient to the issuer of the world's reserve currency.

Kevin Warsh, Mr Trump's handpicked chair of the US Federal Reserve, has made it clear that he will raise interest rates in response to inflationary pressures. Others will be expected to follow. In Japan's case, Washington fears that a yen crisis could become a bond crisis. A disorderly rout could force Japan into ever larger currency interventions – and repeated appeals to Washington to help defend the yen. If such aid proved inadequate, Tokyo could end up defending its currency by dumping US treasury bonds – of which it has more than a trillion dollars worth – and put upward pressure on the very yields Mr Bessent is trying to contain. His demand that Tokyo raise rates and cut spending is not just about Japanese inflation. It is about trying to prevent Tokyo's adjustment to the Iran shock being exported on to America's balance sheet.

Mr Burnham's first Commons speech as prime minister suggests an expansive programme to raise living standards and get growth through regional reindustrialisation. This, he says, rests on the "bedrock" of fiscal responsibility. Mr Burnham promises an activist state to deal with four decades of underinvestment and privatisation. But retaining Rachel Reeves's fiscal framework leaves his investment plans hostage to interest rates, debt costs and feverish "headroom" speculation. Turmoil in global bond markets could derail his industrial strategy before it gets going.

Japan's big bazooka spending programme was meant to do what Mr Burnham now says Britain must do on a smaller scale: use the state to rebuild productive capacity, reduce strategic dependence and build its export competitiveness. Tokyo has the fiscal firepower, a central bank able to dominate the sovereign bond market and trillions invested overseas. The UK government could mimic that and change its fiscal rules, its relationship to the Bank of England and the way investment is accounted for.

But Japan is Mr Burnham's problem writ large. The war in Iran made it urgent to reduce dependence on fossil fuels. But the conflict's inflationary shock makes that objective harder – though not impossible – to pursue. Mr Trump's team is using its leverage over the yen to restrain Tokyo's plan to make Japan resilient to external price spikes. Mr Burnham has been forewarned: the Gulf inflation shock wave bolsters the argument for economic independence while making the means of achieving it more difficult.

Loneliness

Problems with housing, jobs and tech have dented younger people's trust

Hope, Raye told a crowd at Reading festival on Saturday, was the theme of a set inspired by her second album. Having established through a show of hands that most of the audience had just done their GCSEs, and after recounting her own rocky road to stardom, the 28-year-old singer led a series of upbeat chants of "it's gonna be all right".

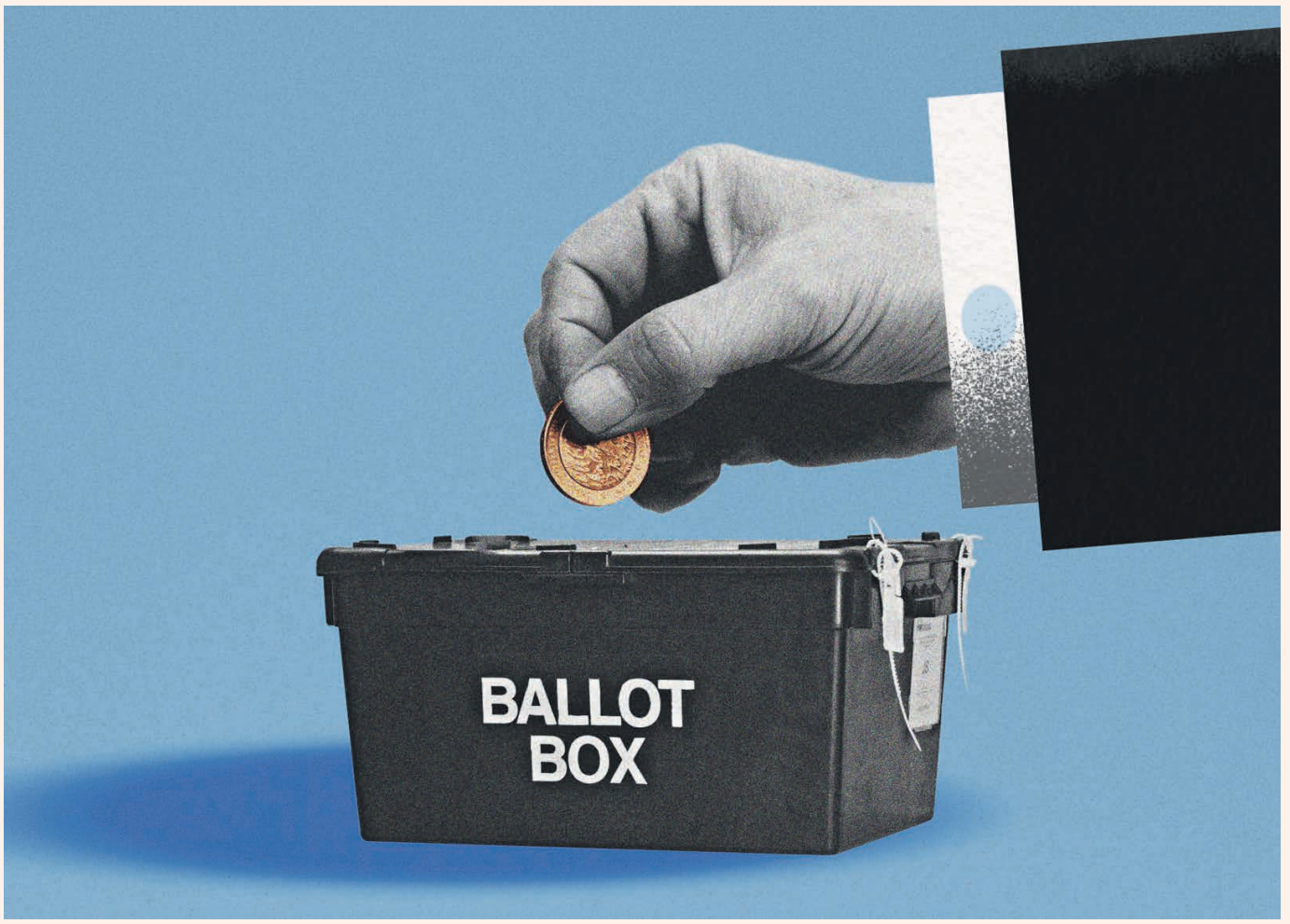
For anyone who thinks adolescence ought to be a time of optimism, it was a charming spectacle. But a new report from the Institute for Public Policy Research thinktank paints a much gloomier picture. Building on existing evidence of declining wellbeing, such as Alan Milburn's report on young people who are not in education or work, the IPPR's researchers found that 11- to 24-year-olds in England (gen Z and older members of gen Alpha) are increasingly lonely. They have fewer friends than young people in the past and are less contented with those they do have. One in 20 say that they have no friends at all. A series of interviews produced worrying evidence of their lack of confidence about the future.

They also spoke about problems with concentration that they associated with social media. When asked what they do in their spare time, the most common answer was "doomscrolling". But while the authors point to "deference to unaccountable tech oligarchs" as one way in which politicians have let younger generations down, their analysis goes wider. It includes housing costs, a shortage of entry-level jobs, student debt, austerity and the Covid-19 pandemic. They conclude that the social contract with youth is broken and needs fixing.

This is a deliberately broad-brush study that focuses on what the 10 million 11- to 24-year-olds in England have in common. But it does not gloss over socioeconomic differences. The steepest falls in life satisfaction over the past decade have been in deprived areas; housing is a far more serious blockage on the route to independence for those without family wealth. Noting that the average deposit has risen to £78,000, the report states that "owning a home before your mid-30s has become close to an inherited trait". With social housing all but impossible to access for most young adults, too many are either stuck with parents or in privately rented flats. Labour has already taken steps to boost the supply of new homes, but must do more to improve young people's prospects. It is a national scandal that so many are locked out.

Adolescence is a complicated time of life, and there is an echo of Sigmund Freud's idea of "ordinary unhappiness" in the report's reference to the "ordinary challenges" of growing up. It is hard to leave school and parents, and decide what to do next. This is one reason why supportive peer relationships are so important, and why research on friendship is worthwhile.

But while gen Z and gen Alpha deserve attention, their problems should not be viewed in isolation. The weakening of the social fabric around them can be seen as part of a wider pattern that the IPPR rightly links to neoliberalism's assault on collectivism. There is no single policy lever that can be pulled to mend the missing threads. But governments and councils are far from helpless. Housing, job-market reforms (including limits on AI in recruitment) and a stronger overall emphasis on generational fairness would all make the world a friendlier place for under-25s.



Burnham has already lost his nerve on big money donors

George Monbiot

ILLUSTRATION: GUARDIAN DESIGN/ ALAMY/GETTY IMAGES

Damn the electorate. They're so impatient. No sooner do they get a new leader than they want another one. Those ingrates are *already* starting to grumble about Andy Burnham. Maybe the country is becoming ungovernable. Perhaps it's social media. Or a consumerist culture, always picking the next shiny thing. Perhaps we're addicted to drama. As we're on our sixth prime minister in 10 years, and as similar levels of discontent surface in many other countries, these claims are recited across the media. What's wrong with us?

Yet our disgruntlement is entirely rational. We give up so quickly on our prime ministers because they give up so quickly on us. Though it may involve different issues, it is always the same betrayal: the public interest is sacrificed for the sake of a tiny number of immensely wealthy people. And it tends to happen almost immediately.

The latest example, which has triggered both fury and grim resignation, is Burnham's backtracking on his intention to cap political donations. It was hardly a radical policy: he proposed that no person would be able to give more than £500,000 to a political party in one year. That would still have granted the very wealthy disproportionate influence over our politics. I have long believed that the only fair system is one in which there should be no private donations at all beyond a standard, fixed membership fee. Otherwise voters will always take second place to money. But at the moment there is no cap, which ensures that billionaires can buy political parties and their platforms. So a £500,000 maximum, pathetic as it is, is at least a start. In a subsequent pledge, Burnham suggested that it could gradually be lowered.

Now, we are told, even this high cap has been abandoned: the representation of the people bill will concentrate instead on limiting donations sent from abroad but not from within the UK: as if billionaire donors and their wealth managers have no expertise in transferring money from one account to another. The loopholes are designed in. Burnham's buckling on this issue is not a small matter. It has immense implications for democracy, for policy formation and for every other aspect of civic life. What it means is that the ultra-rich will continue to own our politics and our country. Succumb to the power of money and you will find yourself, like Starmer, tongue-tied and immobilised, unable to rise to any challenge that requires a confrontation with oligarchic might. In other words, get this wrong and every other wrong thing follows.

> **If our country is becoming ungovernable, it is not because of the people. It is because the ultra-rich have smashed the system**

The official reason for Burnham's U-turn is that trade unions objected: they have long channelled large sums into the Labour party. I doubt this is the real explanation; most of the donations Burnham received for his leadership campaign came from large private donors. Almost half was supplied by Lord Sainsbury, who was also a major funder of the Starmer project. Union money scarcely featured.

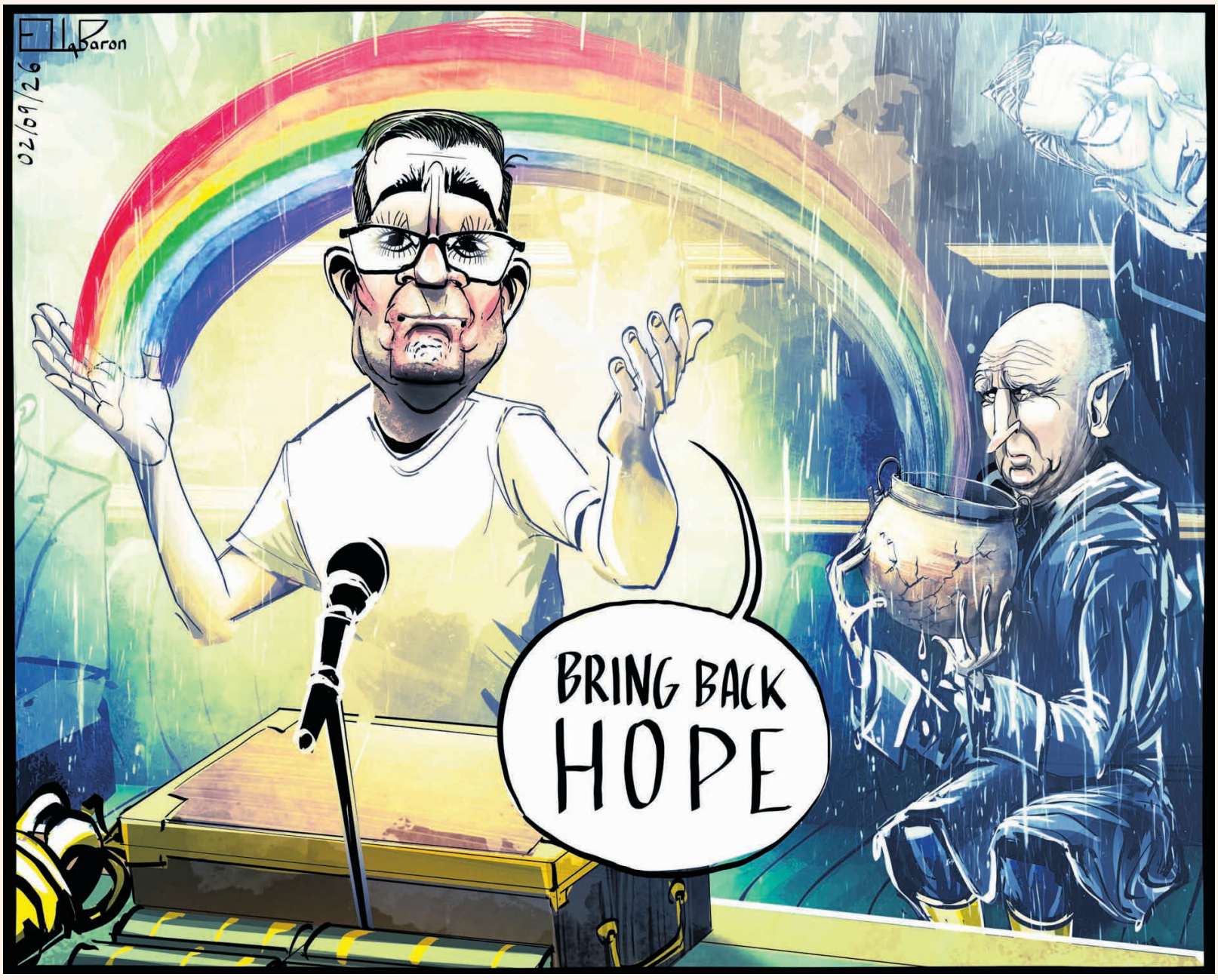
But even if Burnham *has* retreated from his promise for the sake of the unions, I believe trade union funding is also problematic. It ensures that sectoral interests are elevated above the general interest. For example, Labour governments know they can safely bash benefit recipients, who aren't unionised, while they tread very carefully – far too carefully in my view – around the interests of oil workers. And if the unions believe that an uncapped system works for them, they are deluded. They can never match the spending power of billionaires, whose interests in most cases are diametrically opposed to those of their members.

The power of the ultra-rich is now manifest in every policy governments do adopt and the policies they don't. We see it in the new protest laws and their applications. Labelling protesters "terrorists" is part of a long-running programme to ensure that no one dares protest about anything any more. This is happening across the world, through model legislation drawn up by junktanks funded by some of the richest people on Earth.

We see it in the way that datacentres have been labelled "critical national infrastructure", enabling the government to bypass planning processes and impose them on communities, regardless of their impacts on local people's quality of life, on water resources, energy supply and climate breakdown. Again, similar measures are being imposed in other countries at the behest of the same billionaire-funded groups.

We see it in the Burnham government's insistence this summer, in the midst of devastating heatwaves, on launching a consultation that proposes radically curtailing the transition to electric vehicles. I believe there is only one possible explanation for this policy: lobbying by corporations and their shareholders. Their interests appear to outweigh those of the living planet and its 8 billion people. If our country and many others are becoming ungovernable, it is not because of the people. It is because the ultra-rich have smashed the system. New leaders promptly repeat the "mistakes" that caused the eviction of the old one. It makes you wonder: what threat do the oligarchs present that outweighs even the threat of losing power?

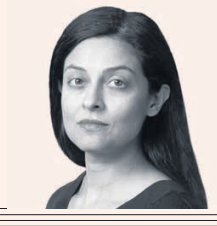
Whatever the reason may be, disillusionment is an inevitable result of such betrayals. I think most people want stability and to be able to trust their governments. I don't want to see Burnham go the way of Starmer. But I know he will succeed only if he defends the public interest against the power of money. So what's stopping him?



ELLA BARON

We MOT our cars: why not our bodies?

Devi Sridhar



"An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure," Benjamin Franklin's adage goes. Yet that simple prescription has been hard to follow in the current NHS. In England, there has been an ongoing shift within the NHS budget towards acute hospital care – treating people in hospitals, often after they are already quite ill – while funding for primary care such as GPs has fallen. We spend heavily on dealing with things such as heart attacks, strokes and other life-threatening conditions, rather than identifying those people who are at higher risk of suffering them and intervening earlier to reduce their chances of getting ill.

So, it's excellent news that the NHS in England will begin to offer free cholesterol tests, and the offer of a blood pressure check, in participating high street pharmacies for those aged 40 to 84. The nationwide phased rollout follows a pilot study in north London in which close to 2,500 patients were checked across 61 community pharmacies. Nineteen percent were found to be at high risk of a heart attack or stroke and were offered advice or referred for medical treatment.

I think it's a brilliant policy move: it is convenient, relatively inexpensive, takes pressure off GPs and hospitals and, most importantly, can reduce preventable suffering and deaths. There are a staggering number of health tests available (and many that are advertised to us by private companies touting "health checkups"). But I'd say that a small number of low-cost, simple measurements and tests are enough to provide a really useful snapshot of health status and indicate whether intervention is required, either through lifestyle change or medical support. It wouldn't take much to offer an annual health MOT in community pharmacies.

I'd start with blood pressure: a simple test reveals how much pressure circulating blood is putting on the walls of the arteries and the cardiovascular system. Hypertension (high blood pressure) is often called the silent killer because you can feel perfectly fine while internal damage is accumulating.

Next I'd suggest a simple waist circumference measurement. This isn't anything to do with how you look, but rather that where we store fat matters for our health, perhaps more than how much we weigh. Visceral fat – fat around the organs in the abdomen – is associated with high blood pressure, insulin resistance and heart disease. For good health, waist measurements should stay under 50% of height.

Also a cholesterol finger-prick test, like the one now being offered. And while we're pricking our fingers for blood, we could add a glucose/HbA1c finger-prick test. HbA1c measures average blood glucose over the previous two to three months and can identify those who are at increased risk of diabetes. Similarly to hypertension, pre-diabetes and even early type 2 diabetes can be symptom-free, so tests are really useful for early detection.

Finally, I'd like to see a simple fitness test. There are many ways to measure fitness, and no quick test is perfect, but you can learn a lot from just a one-mile brisk walk on a treadmill, and checking how many press-ups can be completed in a minute.

The walk gives a good indication of cardiovascular fitness – how effectively a person's lungs, heart, blood vessels and muscles work together to deliver oxygen during exercise. The press-ups check strength and muscular capacity, both of which can give a sense of overall risk of disease, as well as life expectancy.

Knowing these results, plus whether someone smokes, how much they drink, their age and relevant family history, would give a rough, but pretty good, snapshot of health status in an inexpensive and accessible way. There would be some costs to roll out such tests in pharmacies, but it would surely save money for the entire system in the longer term by preventing illness and thus expensive treatments.

Aside from the economics, you could be walking around symptom-free and not know you're pre-diabetic, living with hypertension or at a high risk of a heart attack. You may only find out once you're admitted to hospital or when a disease has progressed far enough to cause symptoms and pain.

That is precisely what prevention is all about. We already have annual car MOTs by trained professionals to prevent a dangerous breakdown on the highway. Doesn't it make sense to do the same for our bodies?

* **Prof Devi Sridhar** *is chair of global public health at the University of Edinburgh*

Established 1906

Country diary

Inkpen, Berkshire

After an entire heat-baked summer without rain, the land looks strange and unlike itself. Fields, banks and grassy margins are the lurid yellow ochre of climate fiction – the mise en scène captured with eerie relevance in the recent BBC TV drama The Rapture.

There are cracks so deep in Weaver's Field that the farmer can push his arm in up to his elbow. Spots of bird's-foot trefoil and sky-blue chicory (the latter on uncannily short stems) polka-dot the otherwise dead pasture. Sentinel field oaks seem unaffected, but shallow-rooted beech trees, familiar in giant caterpillar shapes on the downs, shed shrivelled brown leaves and a poor, early beechnut mast. Gnarly field maples are almost leafless, while sycamores bracket the green with their browning leaf-curl. Even in the keepered woods, laurel has wilted.

For a week, skeins of black smoke drift from the field fires at Enham Alamein, from the eastern end of Greenham Common, and from the New Forest further south. But over the nearby border into Wiltshire, it is white smoke that veils Salisbury Plain all the way to Avebury and its village in the stones. The Westbury White Horse, of Eric Ravilious's 1939 painting, is on fire – or the down and iron age Bratton Camp next to it is. Probably carved from the chalk in the late 1600s, it is surrounded by an apocalyptic vision.

The smell of smoke lingers long after a fire is out. Dad was a fireman who fought the New Forest conflagration in 1976, and Windsor Castle's blaze in 1992. For me, the smell of burning evokes heightened awareness, comfort and safety, an olfactory memory of him coming home from work in damp, sooty uniform, and the alarm bell that rang in my childhood home whenever he was needed.

The rain teases us for a few more days, as towering piles of cumulus sail north like galleons. When it comes, it darkens the down to an unfamiliar moorland brown. The heat rises again afterwards, and with it the strong scent of ammonia from sheep's urine. The only thing to wet the ground all summer, it had remained undiluted and on the surface. Reanimated, mingled with damp dust and baked grass, it's a heady, confusing new scent.
Nicola Chester

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Assisted dying, palliative care and patient choice

I work as a renal physician, including on a transplant ward, so I will have had many of the same experiences as Zubir Ahmed, but I do not share his opinion about assisted dying (As a doctor, I say this: before we even consider assisted dying, fix how we care for the most vulnerable, theguardian.com, 26 August).

It is universally agreed that patients with capacity should be able to make decisions about their treatment. Their decision is the one that matters if they have the ability to use and understand the relevant information and can communicate any decision they make. The doctor needs to explain possible options and their likely outcomes in as fair and balanced a manner as possible.

My daily reality, like that of just about everyone working in the NHS (and in other healthcare systems), involves doing the best I can within constrained resources. Palliative care provision and social services are not unique in being limited by the funding and staffing available. To say that patients should not be allowed to choose an assisted death until these reach some arbitrary standard defined as acceptable by Mr Ahmed or others begs many questions, and denies patients the ability to control their destiny now.

Kidney doctors such as me look after patients receiving artificial kidney (dialysis) treatment. This gives many years of good life to many, but when the burden of living has become too much, it is not uncommon for them to decide to stop their treatment. "Thank you for looking after me so well, and for letting me go," is the most moving thing a patient has ever said to me.

It is essential that safeguards are incorporated into any legislation that allows a patient to choose an assisted death, but we must work out how to craft these safeguards, not deny patients a choice.
Dr John Firth
Cambridge

● Zubir Ahmed is right: palliative care needs investment and development before any further debate on assisted dying. Fear of dying badly has increased as NHS services have been squeezed more than ever. Lauren Edwards' bill would fund assisted dying from the NHS budget, further eroding other services. Specialist palliative care across the UK is patchy, and palliative care in generalist services varies widely.

When a doctor says "there's nothing more that can be done", few patients know to ask for a specialist opinion. Sadly, many clinicians are unaware of developments in specialist palliative care and what can be done to relieve distress.

Without access to adequate symptom relief and competent psychological support, you won't have a real choice when an assisted death is both offered and delivered by the very clinicians who could and should be working to improve your quality of life.

Research reveals that abuse of older people is common, but Edwards' proposals will do nothing to detect abuse and coercion. The bill does not even require cases of assisted dying to be referred to a coroner; there will be no scrutiny of what really happened. In the last 15 years, 209 cases of assisted suicide have been referred to the director of public prosecutions; eight were prosecuted for homicide or other serious crime (almost 4%). How will these be detected under the current proposals? Andy Burnham is right. This bill is an untimely distraction.
Sheila Hollins and Ilora Finlay
House of Lords

We must do more to save care leavers' lives

Your article draws attention to a landmark review that describes the "care cliff" for young people leaving care at 18 leading to tragic outcomes (Falling off the 'care cliff': Tragedy of young lives lost when vital connections end at 18, 25 August). The good news is that there are ways to fix this problem, but they are neither quick nor straightforward.

My own research found that first and foremost the responsible local authority requires sufficient funding, staffing and planning to assess and implement care options when a child is taken into care.

The provision of support need not automatically mean foster care. It can mean kinship care where, following an assessment, a member of the child's extended family becomes the carer for the child in transition to adulthood. Both foster care and kinship care options require dedicated, skilful carers, extended family members, staff and funding in order to provide the flexibility that both young people and carers need.
Dr Bob Broad
Former professor of children and families research, De Montfort University

● The late Eric Sainsbury pioneered research on care leavers in the 1980s. The In and Out of Care study pinpointed the same vulnerabilities among care leavers as this recent research, 40 years ago.

The researchers recommended greater participation by young people and parents, more continuity and stability in relationships with adults, and better preparation for leaving care. Most importantly, they argued that care should not be an administrative placement but a set of relationships and experiences extending across a child's life.

The test of a civilised society is how it treats its most vulnerable members. The shocking death toll among care leavers challenges this country's right to call itself civilised.
Alan Walker
Emeritus professor of social policy, University of Sheffield

A commission on voting reform is essential

Your report (Back review on electoral reform, MPs tell Burnham, 26 August) says: "The UK last rejected electoral reform in 2011 after a referendum [on] whether to change to an alternative vote system." Many people do not realise that the referendum was not about a proportional electoral system. While the alternative vote is the best way to elect a single person, it really doesn't work for a government.

That referendum was primarily a popularity contest for Nick Clegg, and it is no surprise that he was rejected, predominantly by people who were not aware of the actual terms of the referendum. A national commission, taking evidence from people across the country, followed by a general election that includes a manifesto commitment to changing the system, will be a far more reliable and accurate representation of the views of the British people than a referendum is ever likely to be.
Sandy Martin
Chair, Labour Campaign for Electoral Reform

● The amendment to the representation of the people bill on which you report is not the only thing to which the government will have to reply. By law they will have to respond to a parliamentary petition, initiated by me, which calls for the setting up of a national commission in line with the all-party parliamentary group's proposal.

The petition states that it should be an independent, time limited, expert-led review to build consensus for changing the electoral system for parliament. Already more than 25,000 people have signed – twice the number required to trigger a government response. It is eagerly awaited.
Joan Ruddock
Former Labour MP and minister

Corrections and clarifications

● **The actor Sheila Ballantine was born in 1929, not 1928, and died at the age of 96, not 98 as our obituary said (25 August, Journal, p10).**

● **An article said Kew Gardens' Palm House would be open throughout its renovation project; it will remain open while preparations are under way, but will shut when works start in full (Saving 'London's rainforest', 27 August, p11).**

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Forget picky bits: get the spreadables out

Decades before the scourge of "picky bits" (Self-respecting adults should absolutely never use the term 'picky bits', 31 August), our family had "spreadables". We were allowed as many slices of bread as we wanted, but there were rules. No sweet spreadables (honey, jam, marmalade) before we'd eaten at least one savoury (Heinz sandwich spread, Marmite, fish paste).
Judith Eagle
London

● Sheila Preston suggests aliens may have already visited Earth, but were too small for us to notice and came to a bad end (Letters, 24 August). She echoes Douglas Adams, who wrote about how a mighty alien battlefleet arrived on Earth but, owing to a major miscalculation of their size, was promptly swallowed by a small dog.
James Parry
London

● In the tributes to Tim Curry (Obituary, 28 August), I saw no mention of how he put his fabulous voice to fantastic use in the Lemony Snicket audiobooks. He kept our family richly entertained on many a road trip.
Humphrey Keenlyside
London

● Re Novak Djokovic vomiting numerous times at the US Open (Sport, 1 September), isn't it time to ask tennis players to leave the game if they are throwing up on court? I pity whoever to deal with the towel bin Djokovic vomited into.
Eleanor Vale
Long Melford, Suffolk

● In your description of 70 Up (What's On, 28 August), you describe the subjects as "almost at the end of the road". At 75, I hope I still have miles of road ahead of me.
Teresa Quayle
Warrington, Cheshire

Edouard Balladur

French prime minister beaten to the presidency by his former ally Jacques Chirac at the 1995 election

For many months before the 1995 French presidential election, Édouard Balladur, the incumbent prime minister, seemed certain of victory. Opinion polls consistently gave him a lead over his conservative rival Jacques Chirac, and the main leftwing candidate. But, as other politicians have discovered, polls can be misleading and voters change their minds. When the ballot papers were counted it was Chirac who won and succeeded François Mitterrand as president.

The defeat of Balladur, who has died aged 97, was due partly to his lack of appeal to young voters, a consequence of his public image which, somewhat unfairly, was that of an aloof aristocrat. When he first became a minister, the satirical weekly newspaper Le Canard Enchaîné dubbed him "his courteous self-importance" and Le Monde's cartoonist Plantu depicted him as a bewigged 18th-century nobleman being carried around in a sedan chair. His manner and style – three-piece English tailored suits, dislike (figuratively and literally) of getting his hands dirty and obvious distaste for close personal contact – did not play well in the context of a presidential contest.

There was nothing aristocratic in Balladur's background, however, about which he maintained a certain mystery. He was born in Smyrna, now Izmir, in Turkey, the youngest of the six children of Pierre Balladur, the manager of a local branch of an Ottoman bank, and Émilie (nee Latour). His parents became naturalised French citizens in 1932 and the family moved to France when Édouard was six, settling in Marseille, where he went to school at the Lycée Thiers.

Balladur began studies in law at Aix-Marseille University, then continued them at the Institute of Political Sciences (Sciences-Po) in Paris, living for a while in the Roman Catholic hostel where years earlier Mitterrand had resided.

A bout of tuberculosis temporarily interrupted his studies; once cured he completed his military service in Algeria, which was then a French colony, two years before the war of independence, when tensions were high.

On his return to Paris, he was accepted into the École Nationale d'Administration (ENA), then the nursery of France's political, business and technocratic elite.

He began his career with the Conseil d'État and the former state broadcasting organisation ORTF but caught the eye of Georges Pompidou, Charles de Gaulle's prime minister, and became his adviser in 1964. This gave him a ringside seat during the student riots and civil unrest of 1968, and the negotiations that eventually got the country back to work after a national strike.

In 1969, Pompidou succeeded De Gaulle at the Élysée, and Balladur went with him, becoming secretary general of the presidency. After Pompidou's death in 1974, a leading industrialist took Balladur under his wing, and he ran two subsidiaries of a major company, making useful contacts in business. For many years he enjoyed a plum sinecure as president of the company operating the Mont Blanc tunnel.

In 1980, he returned to politics. Chirac, who had walked out of his job as President Valéry Giscard d'Estaing's prime minister in 1976 to found the conservative RPR party and pursue his own presidential ambitions, sacked two of his closest advisers and invited Balladur to replace them. Chirac's first presidential bid the following year failed (though it sank Giscard), but five years later the conservative right recaptured the Assemblée Nationale, and Chirac was appointed prime minister after negotiations with the socialist Mitterrand in which Balladur played a key role.

In this, the first "cohabitation" (in which the president and the government are of different political families), Balladur was appointed minister of finance, economy and privatisation. He was a powerful minister, but was in office for only two years. In 1988, Chirac made a second presidential bid and lost again.

The re-elected Mitterrand called a general election, and the Socialists were able to form a minority government. Balladur returned to the world of business, where he now cut a more substantial figure after his experience in government, and set about establishing networks of friends and contacts.

"Le Monde's cartoonist depicted him as a bewigged nobleman being carried in a sedan chair

Balladur, above centre, at a press conference in 1986. Right, with Jacques Chirac, then mayor of Paris, in 1994, and as a young man doing his military service

ALEXIS DUCLOS/ GAMMA-RAPHO/ GETTY IMAGES; JEAN BERNARD VERNIER/ SYGMA/GETTY

It was clear that the Socialist-led government was heading for defeat in the 1993 general election. Chirac, as the leader of the right, was the obvious choice as prime minister after a conservative victory. But he had been so bruised by his experience as prime minister under Mitterrand's presidency during the first cohabitation that he was not eager to repeat the experience.

Balladur emerged as the clear favourite for the role, acceptable to both Mitterrand and the right. It was evident at the time that Chirac saw Balladur as a proxy for himself. One of his closest allies even suggested Balladur might make weekly visits to Chirac in the Paris city hall, where he reigned as mayor, to brief him on government business. But Balladur established himself as his own man.

The second cohabitation, unlike the first, was a courteous affair. The public took to the new prime minister, and seemed to appreciate the absence of confrontation between Mitterrand and Balladur.

Balladur had never been one of the barons of Gaullism or Chirac's version of neo-Gaullism, and his instincts appeared to favour Christian democracy on the German model more than the national populism of the likes of Charles Pasqua or Philippe Séguin.

There was no shortage of crises – over reform of immigration laws, a strike at Air France that saw clashes between workers and police, the minimum wage for young school leavers, funding for church schools and the plight of French fishermen.

Abroad, there were some serious questions over France's role in the genocide in Rwanda. But Balladur avoided taking on protesters, preferring discreet withdrawal when it appeared there was strong opposition. He was credited with a success in the talks on the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (Gatt) in 1993.

It rapidly emerged that, far from being a surrogate for Chirac, Balladur was a man with views and, more importantly, ambitions of his own. Month after month, polls showed strong public support for him. Relations with Chirac and his allies deteriorated in spite of occasional public and unconvincing displays of unity. It is not clear when he decided to stand for the presidency, but he formally declared his intention in early 1995.

Much of the centre-right and two significant RPR figures – Pasqua and the future president Nicolas Sarkozy – rallied to him. But Chirac had found an issue on which to campaign: the "social fracture" in French society. In the slightly improbable role of the outsider castigating the technocratic elites, Chirac struck a chord, particularly with the young. Balladur's efforts to reach out to the people, including climbing on tables at public meetings, to much general derision, were less successful.

His opinion-poll lead melted, and in the first round of voting Lionel Jospin, the socialist candidate, came top with 23% of the vote, followed by Chirac with a little under 21% and Balladur at 18.5%. Chirac won the run-off.

The new president was not the man to forgive what he regarded as treason, and in the new government there was no place for Balladur, who, however, retained political ambitions. When it became clear that Jean Tiberi, Chirac's successor as mayor of Paris, was tainted beyond political redemption by scandal, Balladur, after some hesitation, declared his candidacy. If he had hoped for help from Chirac, he was disappointed.

Tiberi and Balladur split the centre right vote, allowing Bertrand Delanoé to become in 2001 the first leftwing mayor of the city since the Paris Commune 130 years earlier. Balladur continued to serve as an MP until 2007.

In later years, questions began to be asked about the financing of his 1995 presidential campaign. The allegations centred on the sale of submarines to Pakistan and possible bribes, commissions and kickbacks. In 2002, a bomb in Karachi killed 14 people, 11 of them French employees of the national shipbuilders. Al-Qaida was initially suspected, but later it was suggested that on taking office Chirac had stopped the payment of kickbacks to middlemen and the bombing had been an act of revenge or intimidation.

There were reports that some of the money had found its way into Balladur's campaign funds. Certainly, claims that the huge sums of cash in large-denomination notes paid into campaign accounts were the product of the sale of T-shirts did not convince everyone.

Several members of his entourage were investigated and charged by magistrates looking into alleged misappropriation of public funds in what became known as the "Karachi affair".

In 2017, Balladur himself was charged with funnelling kickbacks on state arms deals with Pakistan and Saudi Arabia, alongside the former defence minister François Léotard. In 2021, the court of justice of the Republic ruled that there was no evidence that Balladur had personally ordered payments linked to the contract, nor sufficient proof to establish the origins of his campaign financing, and he was acquitted of all charges. Léotard was found guilty, and given a suspended prison sentence and a fine.

Balladur's wife, Marie-Josèphe (nee Delacour), whom he married in 1957, died last year. They had four sons, Pierre, Jerome, Henry and Romain.

Stephen Jessel

Édouard Balladur, politician, born 2 May 1929; died 31 August 2026

Stephen Jessel died last year

Plas Johnson

Celebrated saxophonist known for his session work and film music

As a first-call session musician in the Hollywood studios, the saxophonist Plas Johnson needed to be able to cope with anything the occasion might require. One day in 1963, during a session to record Henry Mancini's music for the detective comedy The Pink Panther, directed by Blake Edwards and starring David Niven and Peter Sellers, Johnson was asked to apply his distinctive tone on the tenor saxophone to a stealthy melody suggestive of some sort of nocturnal prowling. Released as a single after the film had become a hit, the tune reached the US Top 10.

"I had a specific saxophone player in mind," Mancini wrote in his autobiography. "I nearly always pre-cast my players and write for them and Plas had the sound and the style I wanted."

Not unusually for the time, Johnson, who has died aged 94, was the only Black musician among the 20 assembled for the session. He was one of the first to make the breakthrough into the highly competitive Los Angeles studio scene, where the two branches of the musicians' union, divided according to colour, had been amalgamated less than a decade earlier.

Johnson's stylistic and technical versatility – he played all the saxophones from soprano to baritone, plus flute and clarinet – led to employment on a huge variety of sessions. He appeared on pop hits including the Platters' The Great Pretender, Sam Cooke's Twistin' the Night Away, Bobby Day's Rockin' Robin (on which he played piccolo) and Larry Williams's Bony Moronie.

But he was also present on albums by Frank Sinatra, Peggy Lee, Nat King Cole and Ella Fitzgerald, and later those by Linda Ronstadt, BB King, Boz Scaggs, Steely Dan, Marvin Gaye, Tom Waits, Bette Midler and Etta James.

He was not pleased, however, when Mancini chose to record the music for subsequent Pink Panther films in a London studio, with the English saxophonist Tony Coe replicating Johnson's interpretation.

Born in Donaldsonville, Louisiana,on the banks of the Mississippi, he was the son of Grace and Plas Johnson Sr, a musician who bought him his first saxophone.

Johnson performing with the Lincoln Center Jazz Orchestra in New York, 2006 HIROYUKI ITO/GETTY IMAGES

When the family moved to New Orleans he began to play in a group with his brother, Ray, a pianist, in clubs where they were billed as the Johnson Brothers Combo.

In 1951, Plas went on the road with the band of the blues singer Charles Brown, an arrangement terminated six months later by the arrival of a draft notice. Emerging from the army in 1954, he moved to Los Angeles, where several other musicians from New Orleans, including the drummer Earl Palmer, were establishing themselves in the studios and welcomed him into their fraternity.

His early patrons in Los Angeles included the bandleader Johnny Otis, the saxophonist Maxwell Davis, who also acted as an A&R man for the Modern label, and the record producer Dave Cavanaugh, who introduced him to Capitol Records. Johnson quickly became recognised as an ideal studio player, and found himself booked for two sessions a day, often for film and television soundtracks.

A favourite of the arrangers Nelson Riddle and Billy May, Johnson would pop up, uncredited, with contributions such as the 16-bar tenor saxophone solo midway through Sinatra's 1961 recording of Blue Moon, orchestrated by Riddle. When Ronstadt recorded three successful albums of standard songs with Riddle in the 1980s, Johnson was a soloist, both in the studio and in concert, on songs such as Little Girl Blue and Sophisticated Lady.

> **"I'd just go in and do what they asked for. It was easy for me. You just have to know when to start and when to stop"**

He had made several rock'n'roll and R&B records of his own for the Capitol label in the 50s and 60s, but on the albums This Must Be the Plas! (1959) and Mood for the Blues (1960) he was able to demonstrate his jazz skills. For the CRC Charter label he recorded two albums of accomplished mood jazz, Sax 5th Avenue (1962) and On the Scene (1963), released for contractual reasons under the pseudonym Johnny Beecher.

The well-rewarded decades in the studios and a 15-year stint in the band on the nightly The Merv Griffin Show prevented him from establishing a reputation as a top-tier jazz musician. The public became aware of his prowess only when the session work began to dry up and he signed a contract with Concord Records.

A warm reception for the albums The Blues (1975) and Positively (1976), and for subsequent records on his own label, led to appearances in clubs and at jazz festivals around the world.

In 2005, reflecting on the studio career for which he had become famous, he told the Long Beach Press-Telegram: "I'd just go in and do what they asked for. It was easy for me and they liked what I played. You just have to know when to start and when to stop."

He is survived by his second wife, Carol, and their two sons and a daughter; by two daughters and a son from his first marriage, to Elizabeth Blinkenberg, which ended in divorce; and by eight grandchildren and 12 great-grandchildren.

Richard Williams

Plas Johnson (Plas John Johnson Jr), musician, born 21 July 1931; died 15 July 2026

Birthdays

Keith Allen, actor and comedian, 73; **Rosalind Coe**, former circuit judge, 67; **Jimmy Connors**, tennis player and commentator, 74; **Paul Goodwin**, conductor, 70; **Lady (Mary) Goudie**, women's rights campaigner, 80; **Salma Hayek**, actor, 60; **Lennox Lewis**, boxer, 61; **Richard McCabe**, professor of English language and literature, Oxford University, 72; **Jonathan Reekie**, director, Somerset House Trust, 62; **Patsy Rodenburg**, voice teacher, 73; **Sir Keir Starmer**, former Labour prime minister, 64; **Moira Stuart**, newsreader, 77; **Kate Summerscale**, writer, 61; **Ella Toone**, footballer, 27; **Chris Tremlett**, cricketer, 45; **Dame Janet Vitmayer**, former chief executive, the Horniman Museum, 74.

Puzzles

Yesterday's solutions

Killer sudoku
Easy

1	5	2	3	6	4	8	9	7
6	8	9	2	7	1	4	5	3
3	4	7	5	9	8	1	6	2
7	6	8	4	5	9	2	3	1
2	1	5	6	8	3	7	4	9
4	9	3	1	2	7	6	8	5
5	7	6	8	3	2	9	1	4
9	3	1	7	4	6	5	2	8
8	2	4	9	1	5	3	7	6

Medium

2	9	1	6	8	7	4	5	3
6	3	7	4	5	2	8	9	1
4	8	5	1	3	9	6	2	7
3	5	4	9	1	8	7	6	2
7	2	8	3	6	4	9	1	5
9	1	6	7	2	5	3	8	4
1	7	3	5	9	6	2	4	8
5	6	2	8	4	3	1	7	9
8	4	9	2	7	1	5	3	6

Codeword

A		L				T		O		A		P		
D	R	A	W		C	O	N	V	U	L	S	E		
E		Z		S		U		E		O		T		
Q	U	I	E	T	E	R		R	I	P	E	R		
U		E		A		I		D		E		O		
A	P	R	O	N		S	T	O	I	C	A	L		
C				C		T				I				
Y	A	P	P	E	D		T	O	M	A	T	O		
		A				C		B				V		
W	R	I	N	K	L	Y		L	A	P	S	E		
R		N		E		P		I		R		R		
E	N	T	E	R		R	E	G	R	E	S	S		
N		I		N		E		E		F		E		
C	O	N	V	E	R	S	E		J	I	V	E		
H		G		L		S				X		R		

Cryptic crossword
Solution No. 30,100

S	U	B	J	E	C	T		H	O	N	O	U	R	S
C		O		S		U		U		O		N		P
H	E	A	D	S		T	I	M	E	T	A	B	L	E
O		R		E		O		I		E		I		C
O	R	D	I	N	A	R	I	L	Y		F	A	C	T
L		S		T				I		P		S		A
			D	I	S	P	L	A	C	E	M	E	N	T
D		A		A		R		T		N		D		E
I	N	T	E	L	L	I	G	E	N	C	E			
N		T		S		M				I		D		A
G	R	I	D		B	A	T	T	A	L	I	O	N	S
I		T		F		R		E		C		N		C
E	D	U	C	A	T	I	O	N		A	N	G	L	E
S		D		I		E		S		S		L		N
T	R	E	B	L	E	S		E	L	E	M	E	N	T

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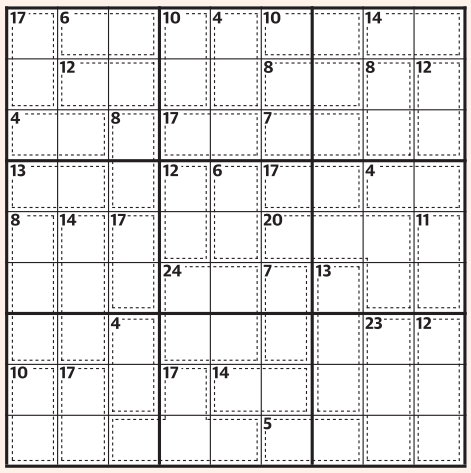
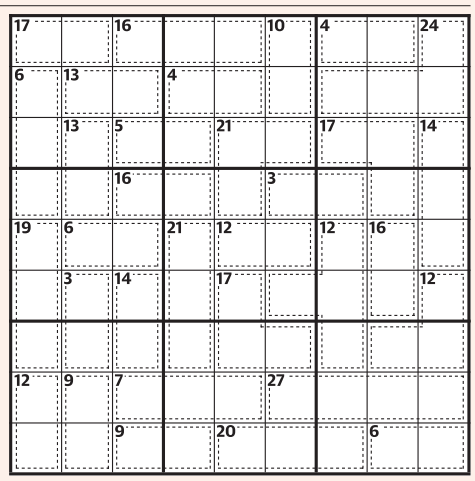
Killer sudoku

Easy

The normal rules of sudoku apply: fill each row, column and 3x3 box with all the numbers from 1 to 9. In addition, the digits in each inner shape (marked by dots) must add up to the number in the top corner of that box. No digit can be repeated within an inner shape.

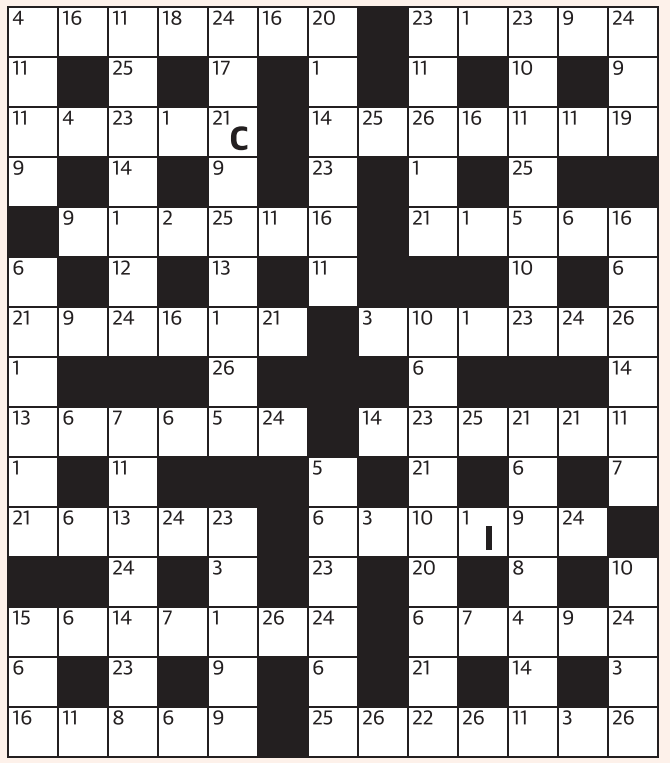


Medium



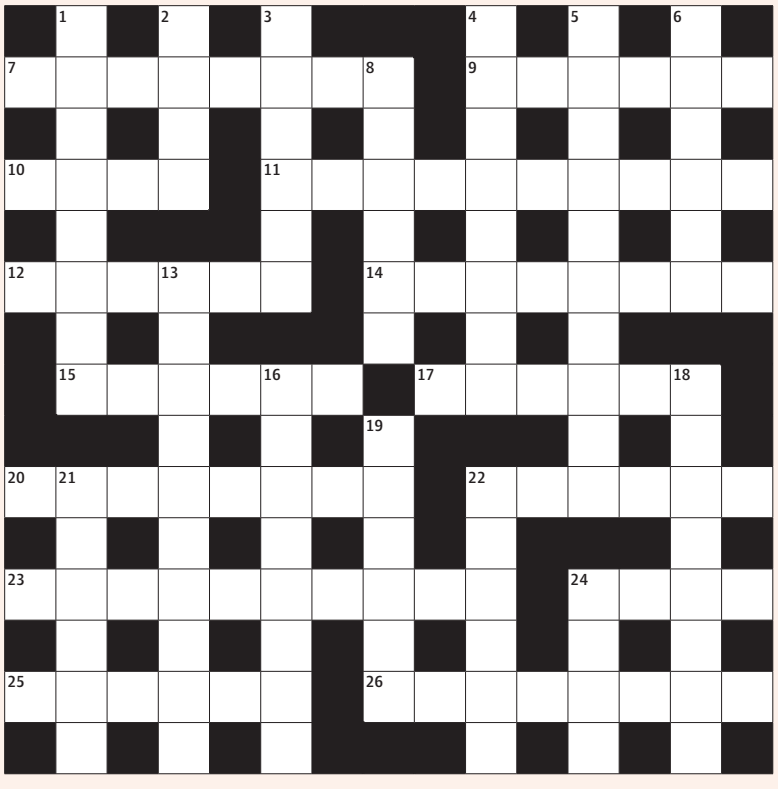
Codeword

Each letter of the alphabet makes at least one appearance in the grid, and is represented by the same number wherever it appears. The letters decoded should help you to identify other letters and words in the grid.



A B C D E F G H I J K L M N O P Q R S T U V W X Y Z

Guardian cryptic crossword No 30,101 set by Fed



Across

7 A better plan - finally - to stop game hunters (4,4)
9 Bears controlling hunger - they eat carrion (6)
10 Crew fitting angle brackets (4)
11 Just dread spending days working in dark (10)
12 Rogue bully by boxing ring (6)
14 Two nurses ignoring half of my request (8)
15/17 Become the best by baking bread or a little rock cake (5,1,6)
20 Watches musical's opening night - that's when these things shine! (4-4)
22 Live in Le Mans - and the VW? (6)
23 Cartoon dog bites old woman clutching cat food in tins? (4,6)
24 Large hole in one tie (4)
25 Part of stag party in strip club getting wrecked in just seconds (6)
26 Drive a good line in test of acceleration (4,4)

Down

1 Combat manoeuvres - keeping watch regularly in caves? (8)
2 Tight biceps after lifting (4)
3/16 Question weaker body? Try exercising. (One probably sits with a computer all day) (6,8)
4/22 This suggests he took bat for discipline (5,3,4,2)
5 Imagine taking group of drivers north on M1 to see Coral's relative? (3,7)
6 Keep everything in pathetic pocketbook (6)
8/19 Tesla isn't working with NYC borough (6,6)
13 Mother might express this clumsily - be smart and kind (6,4)
16 See 3
18 Refinement represented Cecil Day ... (8)
19 See 8
21 ... Lewis's character - conclusively yet obliquely (6)
22 See 4
24 Decide to swap hands and draw (4)

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Life&Arts

Wednesday 2 September 2026

‘No one talks about actors’ dedication. But I had a perm for five months!’

Domhnall Gleeson on family, fame and dancing for Taylor Swift

Arwa Mahdawi
My passion for pasties
page 3

Joe Lycett
From comedian to pub landlord
page 8

A MOMENT THAT CHANGED ME

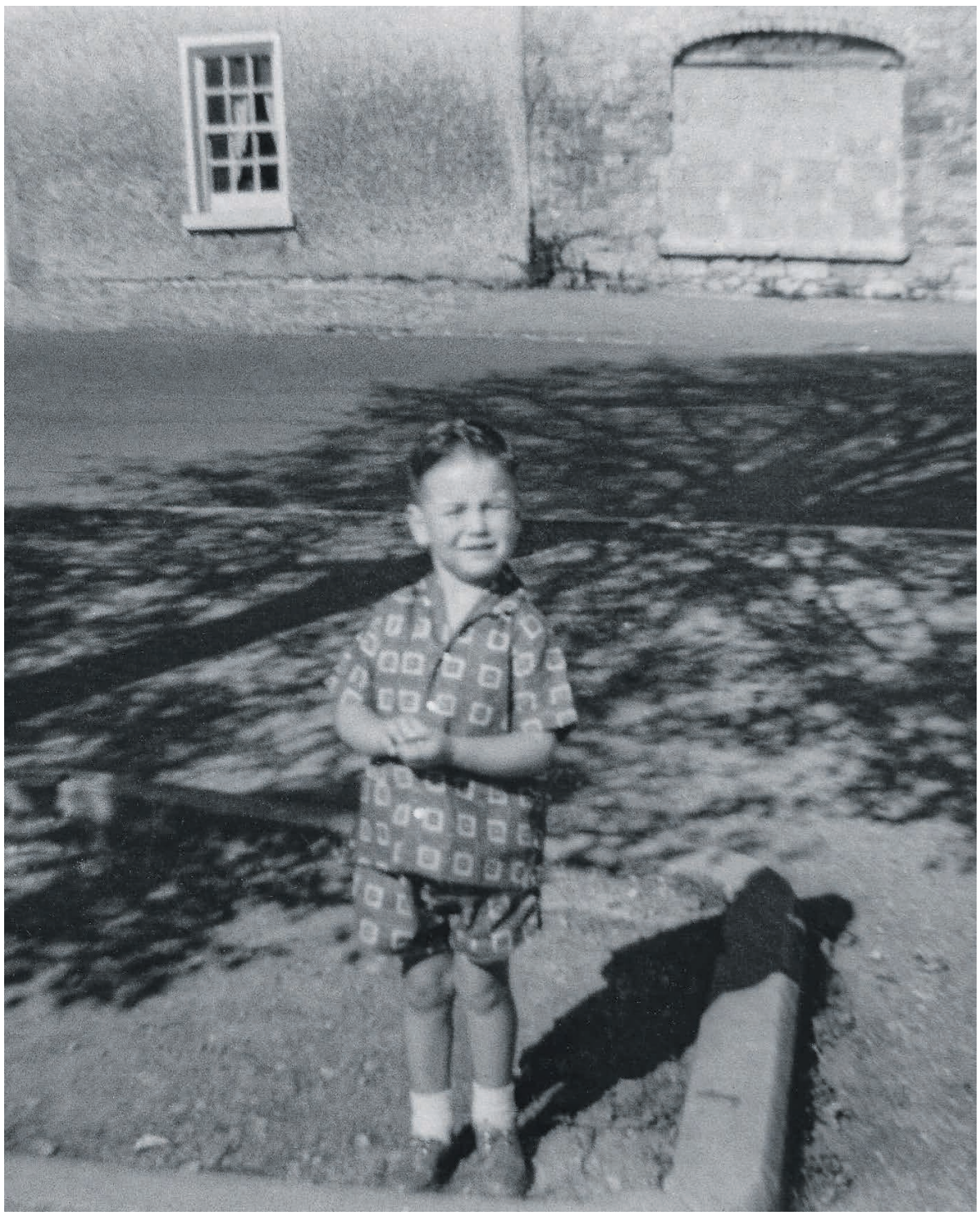
After decades of panic attacks, I finally discovered why I was terrified of getting on a train

When a therapist asked if I had ever been in a crash, I denied it. Then my parents reminded me of a shocking event when I was four

Mike McNally, as told to Farryn Stock

In 2000, I had been living in London for just over a decade and working at EMI Records for five years. Having moved to Brixton from Surrey – where space and peace were abundant – in the late 80s, I noticed I was becoming increasingly anxious and claustrophobic, particularly on public transport.

As things got worse, I had a string of distressing panic attacks. Every time, it felt like the world around me was closing in. Then, in July 2003, during my daily commute between Brixton and the South Bank, I had a panic attack so intense I tried to climb out of the tube carriage doors. Thankfully, other passengers held me back until we arrived at the next platform – but I knew the problem was no longer something I could ignore.



◀ *Mike McNally as a child, circa 1965*

The following year, my GP referred me to a hypnotherapist. During sessions, I would close my eyes and feel as if I was falling back through time to different points in my life. After three months of retracing old memories, my therapist asked me plainly if I had ever been in a train crash. "No, I think I'd know," I said, slightly taken aback. Despite my insistence, she asked if I would check with my parents next time I saw them, in case I had been too young to remember.

So I did. To my disbelief, my parents looked at each other for a second before admitting that I had, in fact, been involved in a train accident as a child.

It was 4 September 1965 and, at four years old, I was returning home from a trip with my grandmother to Ireland, where we'd spent the summer with other relatives. We had taken the ferry from Dublin to Holyhead in Wales, then boarded a train to London. As we sat waiting to depart, another passenger train entered the platform and crashed into us. Our train was thrown a few feet backwards, lifting the carriage off its framework and trapping us inside. My grandmother and I were both unharmed but we were squashed together in the September heat amid rising panic, with other passengers seriously injured around us.

My parents said they had tried to talk to me afterwards about what had happened, but I would only scream and run away. Not wanting to upset me further, they stopped talking about it entirely.

The conversation with my mum and dad changed everything. I suddenly had clarity about the source of more than a decade's worth of fear and panic. It explained why I had struggled with boarding trains, planes and sometimes even a full car. Every time I found myself in a situation where I felt trapped or stuck, my brain took me back to the crash, despite having no conscious memory of it. Discovering the truth meant I could work with my therapist to develop the tools I needed to stop living in fear.

A short while after finishing my hypnotherapy, in 2006, I went on a work trip to Vancouver. We had a scheduled team meeting at the top of Whistler Mountain – and the only way up was a 30-minute cable car ride. My colleagues told the cable car workers that I suffered from claustrophobia, and they reassured me there was a halfway point where I could get out if I felt I couldn't make it to the top. But as the journey began, I found myself feeling surprisingly calm, despite knowing I would be trapped for at least 15 minutes.

As the cable car reached the midpoint, I saw that the venue staff had come out to applaud me. I knew then that I could make it the whole way up. Instead of choosing to disembark, I called my hypnotherapist and said: "You'll never guess where I am – halfway up Whistler Mountain!"

Not feeling so terrified all the time meant I could finally live the life I had always wanted. This became even more important when my daughter was born six years later. I wanted to be the best version of myself for her – and that wouldn't have been possible when I was living in a constant state of fear. Now she's 14, our shared love of music means we are always travelling across London by train or tube, going to packed concerts together. If it weren't for my unexpected discovery, I might never have been able to share those moments with her.

▶ *As he is today*

PHOTOGRAPHS: COURTESY OF MIKE MCNALLY

PASS NOTES
№ 5,042

50 (and thriving)

Age: You can work this one out.
Appearance: Cool, calm and collected. Also, very tidy.
Don't you mean frazzled? Wouldn't you say you're more together now than you were at 20, or even 30?
Who says I'm not still in my 20s? Why are we comparing ages anyway? A new survey has found that 50 is the age at which Brits feel "most confident and in control of their lives".
And what source do we have to thank for this? British Gas commissioned the survey of 2,000 British adults.
Getting the boiler serviced is one way to feel like a grownup. The survey found that recycling, putting clothes away and knowing when bin day is were indicators that someone had "got it together".
What's wrong with a chairdrobe? It's a perfectly workable system! It's a pile of clothes, is what it is. Respondents also said that having a litter-free car, spare batteries to hand and washing up after a dinner party, instead of leaving it till the next day were signs of adulthood.
I knew I was right to buy that bulk pack of triple As. It's when you've got a spare CR2032 battery that you know you're really nailing it.
These do seem somewhat low bars for having your life together. So you want to hold people to owning a car, or buying a house or becoming a parent? Not in this economy.
True. But surely there are more meaningful markers of maturity than making your bed or drinking two litres of water a day? As if you do either *every* day. You're right, though: the top sign you've got your life under control was making regular savings.
Surely it's what's on the inside that counts for adulthood. The next top indicators were enjoying your own company, admitting when you're wrong and saying no to things you don't want to do.
OK, those are way tougher than knowing when bin day is. It does get confusing around the bank holidays.
You're telling me that you have to be 50 to be on top of all this? That's the average age respondents felt most in control of their lives. But 30% said they felt nowhere near being sorted, while 56% thought no one ever really is.
Didn't we only just discover that the brain doesn't reach adulthood until age 32? Yes, that was a Cambridge University finding, and probably more credible than this consumer research.
So by 50 you've only been a grownup for 18 years. Long enough to know to make your bed.
Do say: "Actually, drinking two litres of water a day is excessive for most people."
Don't say: "Is it bin day?"

COVER PHOTOGRAPH: DAVID LEVENE/THE GUARDIAN

Arwa Mahdawi

Other celebrities could learn a thing or two from Olivia Rodrigo

Donald Trump, the 80-year-old president of the United States, spent his weekend whining about a lake and posting memes of Donald's Ducks. Olivia Rodrigo, a 23-year-old pop star, spent *her* weekend trying to Make America Somewhat Decent Again. On Saturday, Rodrigo hosted the inaugural Daisy Chain Fields festival, bringing together female artists to raise money for women-focused non-profits which have had their funding slashed by the Trump administration.

In a perfect world a singer holding a benefit concert for feminist charities wouldn't be radical stuff. But we live in hell. Trump has successfully bullied US institutions into doing his bidding. Universities have defunded diversity, equity and inclusion programmes, many media outlets have kowtowed to the US's self-styled king and tech CEOs have jumped into bed with him. Women's rights are going backwards globally and our civil liberties are under attack.

It has become depressingly clear just how many of the rich and powerful are self-serving cowards who will abandon social justice issues as soon as it becomes mildly inconvenient. So it was refreshing to see a young musician rally people together in service of reproductive justice at a festival that was proudly feminist and didn't pretend to be non-political.

Rodrigo has always used her platform to speak out: when Roe v Wade was overturned in 2022, the then 19-year-old musician condemned the decision on stage at Glastonbury. Rodrigo, who is Filipino American, also publicly told the Trump administration not to use her music in their "racist, hateful propaganda" when one of her songs was featured in a government video.

Rodrigo has also not been silent about Gaza: a subject many celebrities are terrified to mention, because empathising with Palestinians is a tried-and-tested way to ruin your career. Last year she wrote on Instagram about how "mothers, fathers and children in Gaza are starving, dehydrated and being denied access to basic medical care …" Rodrigo also gave a nod to Palestine (which, thanks to Israel's attacks on maternity wards and healthcare, is a reproductive justice issue) at a press conference for her festival, where she wore a dress made by the Palestinian fashion brand Nöl Collective.

Speaking on the New York Times's Popcast earlier this year, Rodrigo said acknowledging social issues is part of expressing herself. "I think it would just be disingenuous to be like, I don't feel heartbroken about what's going on in Gaza. As an artist, I feel like that's just what you do," she said.

Celebrities shouldn't have to get political, some will say. No, of course not. But if you have a huge platform and oodles of money and even a smidgen of a conscience, then you should probably *want* to use your resources and reach for good, shouldn't you? Giving money to charity is one thing, but it takes more courage to show people where you stand, knowing there may be repercussions for it.

Taylor Swift certainly seemed to agree with that at one point. She famously stayed quiet in the lead-up to the 2016 election, but later, when more celebrities were doing so, came out to endorse progressive causes. "I need to be on the right side of history," she said in the 2020 documentary Miss Americana.

But while Swift did endorse Kamala Harris in 2024, she has been very careful about what she says during Trump 2.0. Unlike all the musicians who have publicly condemned the Trump administration for using their music in offensive posts, she seemingly ignored the use of her songs by Trump for months. In recent weeks her songs have been quietly removed from Trump's ragebait posts, but Swift has not issued any sort of statement about it. And she hasn't said anything about issues such as Gaza or ICE.

There are limits to celebrity activism, sure. But in a world where free speech is under attack, it feels increasingly important for celebrities to speak out. Let's hope Rodrigo's festival prompts more of her peers to have some guts.

▼ *Trying to Make America Somewhat Decent Again … Olivia Rodrigo*

I deserve an OBE for services to Cornwall

I think maybe an OBE is in order. I am fairly certain my presence in the UK has something to do with the recent rain. The landscape was parched thanks to weeks of drought when I flew into Heathrow. As soon as I landed, it began to pour.

But that's as it should be. I am part Cornish and spent my childhood summers shivering on wet beaches in the south west. This year I brought my US born-and-bred daughter over from Philadelphia to Cornwall for the first time so she too could experience the joys of a British summer holiday. Continuous sun would have ruined the authenticity.

As my five-year-old ate soggy chips in gale-force winds while fending off aggressive seagulls, I introduced my American wife to the Cornish pasty. "What do you think?" I asked after she'd taken a bite. "Sort of like an empanada but needs more seasoning," she replied. I immediately instructed her to keep her voice down to avoid another diplomatic incident. Back in 1999, William Grimes, then the food critic for the New York Times, caused an uproar when he compared the pasty to a doorstop and wrote: "Cornwall, England, probably suffers more bad food per square mile than anywhere else in the civilised world."

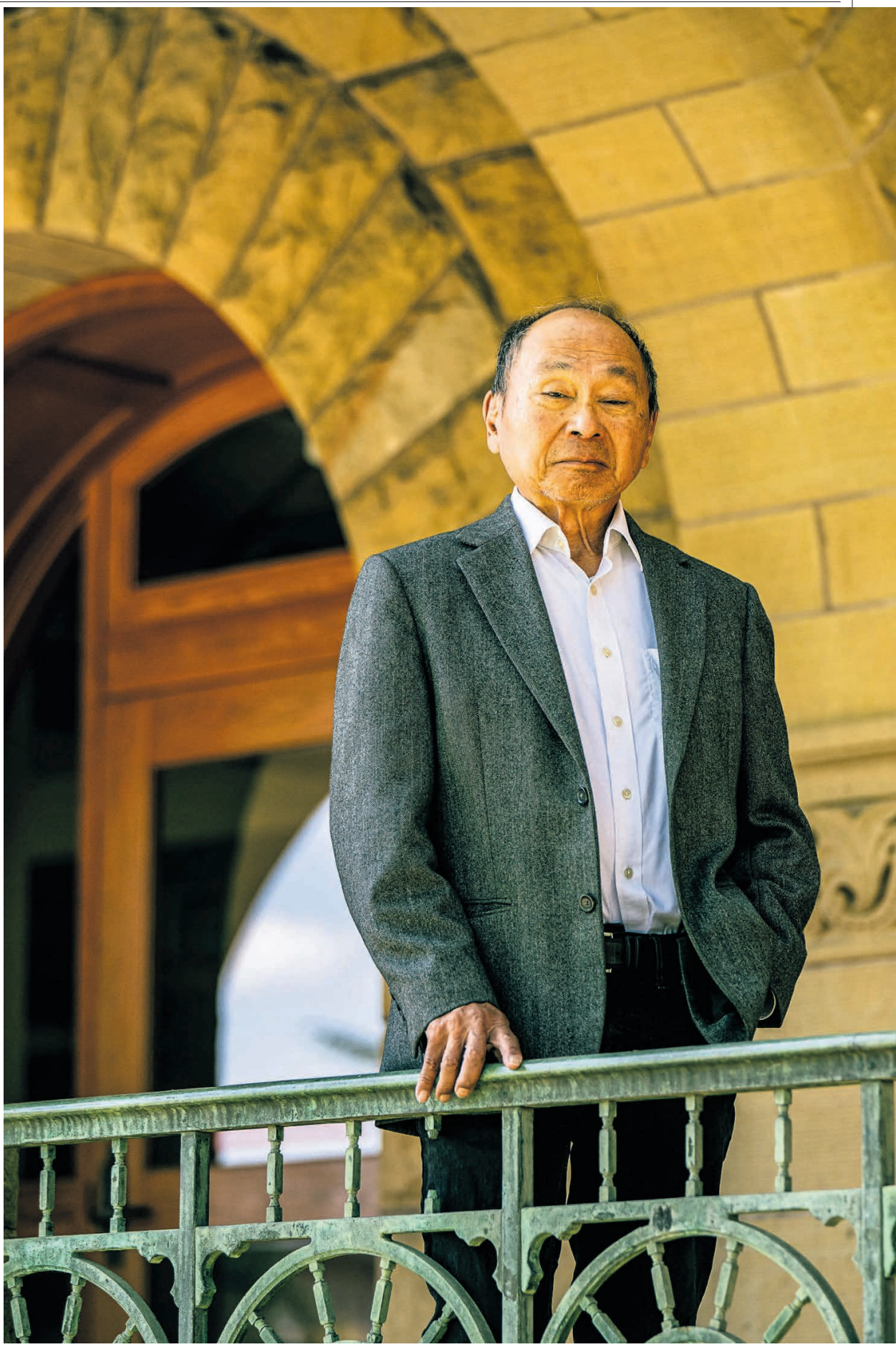
This was a declaration of war and the UK press came together to fight back. The Plymouth Evening Herald put the story on its front page with the headline: "Lay Off Our Pasty." The Times wrote that Grimes "and his bumptious comments may be dismissed". It added: "He is merely overpaid, overfed and over here." Meanwhile, citizens mobilised. The owner of a pasty shop in Helston burned the US flag and instructed her teenage son, Fergus, to avoid beefburgers until Grimes apologised. He did not apologise, so I imagine Fergus has been a vegan for the past 27 years.

My wife finished the pasty and declared it "quite nice" and "extraordinarily filling", which I think counts as praise. I hope the OBE people are taking note. It's not just the rain you can thank me for. I'm also restoring the honour of the Cornish pasty, one American at a time.

‘Fundamentally, we’re living in a

In 1989 Francis Fukuyama wrote an essay declaring the triumph of liberal democracy. It won him universal acclaim but was widely misunderstood. Now he explains what he really meant

Jonathan Freedland



There are not many public intellectuals who can say they’ve been cited by Capt James T Kirk of the Starship Enterprise, but Francis Fukuyama is one of them. In Star Trek VI: The Undiscovered Country, William Shatner’s character is in a reflective mood, and speaks to the Klingon chancellor. “Some people think the future means the end of history,” Kirk muses. “Well, we haven’t run out of history quite yet.”

When the film came out in 1991, and in the years that followed, you’d often hear comments like that. They were nods to a thesis so famous it hardly needed spelling out. It debuted in a 15-page essay written by Fukuyama, then a 36-year-old thinktanker, which was published in the National Interest, a right-leaning journal of US foreign policy, in the summer of 1989. There was a question mark in the title: it was called The End of History?. In book form three years later, it became The End of History and the Last Man. But these were subtleties that, as we shall see, got lost.

The essay made its author internationally renowned and helped power a career as a political scientist, philosopher and analyst, specialising in foreign policy and political economy. Fukuyama’s counsel was sought by governments and boardrooms worldwide, from the C-suite of Ford to the tent of the Libyan dictator Muammar Gaddafi. But, as is clear from his new memoir – which is less a conventional autobiography than the story of a life in ideas, one that revisits intellectual shifts and academic schisms and which, by contrast, scarcely mentions the author’s 40-year marriage – it also became something of a millstone.

I ask how he feels about that article. Perhaps the way the Beatles might have come to regard their breakthrough hit She Loves You: grateful for the success, but tired of having to replay it, again and again.

“Well, a little bit of both,” Fukuyama, now 73, says on a video call from California, via a computer which, incidentally, he built himself. “I certainly think that I would not have gotten the attention that I did if I’d used a different title. So that made a difference.”

But there has been a downside. “You know, I get these ridiculous comments, on the internet. If I post a picture of my grandkids, they say, ‘Oh, I thought it was the end of grandkids.’”

The problem, as Fukuyama sees it, is a 37-year-old misunderstanding – one that took root as soon as the essay was published. Thanks to that simple, memorable phrase – “the end of history” – people assumed that Fukuyama was arguing that, with the cold war winding down and the Berlin Wall about to fall, human conflict, even human events, were drawing to a close. That all the big arguments had been settled, there would be no more war, and the entire world was about to live under US-style liberal democracy. As he puts it in his new book, In the Realm of the Last Man, it was taken to be an expression of “naive liberal triumphalism, and I have been asked several times a week over the past three decades whether I wished to recant my argument. I have written thousands of words and given dozens of interviews seeking to answer this question.”

Indeed, he tells me, that was “one of the reasons for writing the memoir: to finally get down in a very clear way what I was intending and the ways I was wrong, and the ways I believe I’m still right.” The book makes clear his argument was a subtle one, drawn from Hegelian thought and inspired by an earlier interpreter of Hegel, Alexandre Kojève, from whom Fukuyama borrowed that all-important title.

According to Kojève, the end of history was the moment when a principle or set of ideas emerged that could not be bettered, in terms of their ability to satisfy the human beings who lived in a system shaped by them. Kojève himself had playfully proposed the year 1806 as the end of history, since that was the moment when,

‘I have been asked several times a week over three decades whether I wished to recant’

really weird time'

◀ *Francis Fukuyama wrote The End of History? when he was 36*

▶ *Chicago mayor and potential presidential candidate Rahm Emanuel*

PHOTOGRAPHS: WINNI WINTERMEYER/THE GUARDIAN; ARIEL SCHALIT/AP

thanks to his defeat of the Prussian monarchy in the Battle of Jena-Auerstedt, Napoleon brought the code that bore his name to the heart of old Europe, the legal framework that emerged from the French Revolution. As Fukuyama writes, the revolution of 1789 "established the underlying principles of a modern liberal order, namely, the two principles of liberty and equality, or the equality of liberty".

Of course, those principles were not immediately or fully implemented: even as Napoleon was advancing in central Europe, the French colonial authorities were putting down a slave revolt in Haiti. "But Kojève's point was that once the idea of universal freedom got out, it was only a matter of time before those principles became accepted and practised around the world." Even if the time it took was measured in centuries, with plenty of events - including two world wars - along the way.

This was the nature of the argument Fukuyama was making for 1989. Not that liberal democracy was perfect or that it had been achieved everywhere and that all conflict was over. But rather that the evidence had become compelling that there was no better guiding principle or system. And Fukuyama still maintains that view.

"For the last 30-odd years, I've been saying that I'm looking for an alternative system that purports to be more humanly satisfying than liberal democracy. And a number of candidates have come along. Some of them, I think, are very implausible." He cites Iranian-style theocracy as one candidate. The Chinese model is a more serious contender. As an authoritarian system, he says, it can make decisions more efficiently than liberal democracy. "So the question for me is: is this also a sustainable system? Are we going to see this [replicated] in other places in 30 years? And that is still an open question." If, over the next generation or so, China turns out to be much more successful than the US, with an exportable model that satisfies human needs, then Fukuyama will be "perfectly happy to concede that I was wrong on the fundamental premise".

He also accepts that the current consensus on liberal democracy is far from universal, and that the "liberal" part of that idea - the belief in constraints and checks on elected power - is especially vulnerable. He writes that is in part because support for those constraints has often been contingent on a collective memory of how dangerous the world can become without them. A younger generation who have known only peace and prosperity, and for whom the tyrannies of the mid-20th century are ancient history, will only be dimly aware of the perils of unrestrained, illiberal rule.

But surely Donald Trump, born one year after the defeat of nazism, is living proof that proximity to that dark history hardly entails respect for the guardrails imposed by liberal democracy? How do we explain the US president's disregard for that danger?

"You know, that is one of the great psychological questions that future historians are going to have to answer. He has had this weird attraction not just to the current Russia and Vladimir Putin but, all the way back in the 1980s, he visited Moscow. He took out these full-page ads attacking Nato way back then, when we were still in the middle of the cold war. I mean, it somehow has to do with his lack of any kind of moral compass beyond his own self-interest. He basically worries about whether he can make money, and if you can make money in a tyranny, that's fine with him."

It's worth getting to the bottom of what Fukuyama meant all those years ago because, once you're there, you find an idea more interesting than the soundbite versions of his thesis ever allowed. The final paragraph of his original essay declared: "The end of history will be a very sad time." With the fundamental question of politics essentially resolved, even if far from realised, "the worldwide ideological struggle that called forth daring, courage, imagination and idealism, will be replaced by economic calculation, the endless solving of technical problems, environmental concerns, and the satisfaction of sophisticated consumer demands." As Fukuyama writes now: "The being who emerges at the end of history is typically someone stripped of struggle, risk and ambition, someone whom the philosopher Nietzsche labeled the 'Last Man'. We have been living in the realm of the Last Man for some time now." Once this notion is unpacked, even those who dispute Fukuyama's reading of 1989 will concede that he had an uncanny inkling of what was to come.

For what he was anticipating was that liberal democratic societies might prove adept at delivering stability and relative material comfort, but that would still leave something profound missing. He cites Socrates' notion of *thymos*, or spiritedness: that part of the soul which desires the respect or esteem of other human beings. The last man might have his basic economic needs met, but he would be angry if he believed he was not receiving the recognition that was his due. It amounts to the simple craving for one's equal dignity to be respected.

Reading those passages, it's hard not to think of the worldwide surge of nationalist populism and the Maga movement in particular. "The mass of the people that come to Donald Trump's rallies feel that the liberal elites have not been respecting them," says Fukuyama. "One of the things that propelled Trump to the top of the American political system is his recognition that they were being disrespected, and he found a way of talking to them in a manner that didn't show that kind of contempt. He doesn't use big words. He tells stupid stories that they think are very funny, and you know, educated people are appalled by."

This, he says, is a key challenge for Democrats. "If you really want to solve this problem of equally distributed respect … it's about both listening and talking. I think a lot of elite politicians actually don't listen to people that are not like themselves. They don't necessarily listen to ordinary people, and they also don't know how to speak to ordinary people." He notes the desperation of Democrats "looking for working-class candidates that they can push" in the November midterm elections, but says the "equal distribution of respect requires both policies that distribute actual material benefits more equally and a different kind of political discourse". In that context, he likes the look of former Chicago mayor and potential 2028 presidential candidate Rahm Emanuel, a man with a streetfighter's manner who is also, says Fukuyama, "very funny".

There's a chapter in the new book whose title hints at the other story the memoir tells: On Changing Your Mind. Fukuyama has made the relatively rare political journey from right to left. A former official in the Reagan and Bush administrations, he tells of his time as a disciple of the noted conservative scholar Allan Bloom and as part of the neoconservative gang of thinkers who prepared the intellectual ground for the 2003 invasion of Iraq. Fukuyama renounced his support for that war in February 2004. In the book, he admits that what prevented him from making the break earlier was, in part, less ideological than social and human: he didn't want to end friendships he had cherished.

'I think a lot of elite politicians don't listen to people who are not like them'

Still, his departure from the right was not solely in the sphere of foreign policy. While his former colleagues could only see government as an obstacle to be cleared out of the way, his own studies of societies around the world led him to regard a capable state as essential. As if to confirm how far he has travelled, one chapter of the book is titled Learning to Love Bureaucrats.

I ask whether his perspective might have differed from other Republicans and conservatives because of his Japanese-American roots, which are detailed affectingly in the book. It tells of his grandmother, a "picture bride" who left Japan at 21 when she was put on a "steamer to Los Angeles all alone, where she was to marry a stranger 10 years older than herself", and of an uncle left "penniless" after the store he built was effectively confiscated when he, like all Japanese-Americans on the west coast, was interned during the second world war. Did he see things differently because he was a member of an ethnic minority that had suffered a history of exclusion?

"No, I don't think so," he says immediately. "I've tried to avoid thinking of myself as an Asian-American my whole life, because I just don't like that sort of identity politics. It's true that, after 11 September, you had certain rightwing people in the United States saying, 'Well, we ought to put Arab-Americans in camps.' And, yeah, of course, I felt that that was really wrong based on my family history, but I don't think that made me especially sensitive to those sorts of issues."

What changed his mind was a changing world. Even if he still thinks the big question has been resolved, events matter. The Iraq war and the crash of 2008 upended his worldview. As he puts it, "If you're an intellectual and you believe certain things about the use of military force in foreign policy and about unregulated markets in economics, and both of them lead to big disasters, you ought to rethink some of those assumptions." For Francis Fukuyama, an end to history never meant an end to thinking.

In the Realm of the Last Man is published by Profile Books (£20) and is out on 8 September

‘I’m very much on the left’

Romantic leads, villains, youthful wizards: Domhnall Gleeson has played them all. Now he’s back with a new season of The Paper. How much does he owe to his father Brendan? And how did he end up in a Taylor Swift video?

Steve Rose

Domhnall Gleeson has got so much new stuff coming up, someone recently joked that this was the “summer of Domhnall”. Now the phrase is all over the internet, and Gleeson is mortified: “The worry is that somebody will say this to me now thinking that I believe it.” He doesn’t know where it came from – possibly his co-star Gayle Rankin on his new movie The Incomer. “It’s certainly not something I’m trying to push … but it would be great if it could be the headline.”

He’s in a good mood when we meet at a London hotel on a hot afternoon. You could say he’s good at interviews – charming, funny, garrulous, the perfect chatshow guest. He could just be *acting*, but he seems to be a genuinely good-natured, grounded sort of guy.

The Incomer, an eccentric Scottish comedy, is one of three new projects Gleeson has coming out in a matter of weeks. The others are the second season of the US Office spin-off The Paper and Werner Herzog’s new film, Bucking Fastard, which is about to play at the Venice film festival. More of all this later, but first we must address Gleeson’s most prominent, and least probable, recent role: as the star of a Taylor Swift music video.

Directed by Swift herself, the video for Opalite is a bizarrely goofy concoction with an equally bizarre origin story. It came about because the two of them appeared on the Graham Norton show last October. Fellow guest Cillian Murphy joked that The Paper was worth watching for Gleeson’s dancing alone. “I’m hoping to get in a Taylor Swift music video,” he joked in reply.

That was that, he thought. “Two two weeks later, we got an email. Like, wild!” Not just him: Swift asked every other guest on the show to be in the video – Murphy, Greta Lee, Jodie Turner-Smith, Lewis Capaldi, even Norton himself. “No one else in the world can come up with an idea like that and make it happen,” Gleeson says.

Gleeson has the starring role, as a lonely man who gets an upgrade on his painful relationship with a cactus when he is magically matched with fellow loner Swift. Then they dance together joyfully in glittery turquoise tracksuits.

“They told me the day before there was going to be a dance. I was like, are you fucking joking?” Gleeson recalls. Are you good at that kind of thing, I ask. “No. I’m terrible at it!” He spent all night practising in front of the mirror. But Swift’s direction did the rest: “She said ‘full send’, though I didn’t know what that meant. She was like, ‘The moves don’t matter. You just gotta go for and love it, trust in it and experience it.’” The first take after she said that was the one they used.

So did he go to her wedding?

“Er …” He ums and ahs. “Can I plead the fifth?”

Sociable as he is, Gleeson is very good at protecting his privacy. He’d rather not answer questions about his immediate family (he has been married to the producer Juliette Bonass since 2023), and he’s not on social media at all, he says. “I think that’s just like a line in the sand that helps immediately in terms of the personal not being public.”

In short, Gleeson does a fine job of staying under the radar while also being everywhere. With his bright red hair and striking features, Gleeson is not exactly inconspicuous. “I’m quite unusual or individual-looking,” he admits. But on screen he is remarkably adaptable. He doesn’t have a type. He’s played romantic leads (Richard Curtis’s About Time, for example), evil villains (General Hux in the Star Wars movies, or terrorising Julianne Moore in last year’s Echo Valley), real-life characters (Bob Geldof, AA Milne), comical idiots (Frank of Ireland). Family films, period dramas, westerns, sci-fi – he seems to fit in wherever you put him. Even his age is strangely malleable: he’s now 43 but looks barely any older than he did playing Bill Weasley in the Harry Potter films.

What’s more, he’s so good at accents, I’d almost forgotten he’s Irish. When I first met him a decade ago, it was on the set of Frank, the indie satire based on the outsider musician Frank Sidebottom. We were in a freezing cabin in rural Ireland but Gleeson was playing a middle-class English guy, and stayed flawlessly in accent throughout (but not in character).

In The Incomer he’s passing as Scottish, which is more challenging: “Going to Scotland and doing a Scottish accent in front of an all-Scottish crew is a very different experience.” It was fitting, though: Gleeson plays the unwelcome visitor of the title, a mainland bureaucrat who comes to a remote Scottish isle to evict its only residents, a pair of insular siblings (Rankin and Grant O’Rourke). Written and directed by Louis Paxton, the film is a charming mix of surreal comedy, local folklore, rugged landscapes and tender companionship, plus a great deal of seagull action – catching them, eating them, being attacked by them, even pretending to be them.

At heart it’s a film about isolation and acceptance, he says. His character is as lonely as the siblings: an awkward middle-manager type. He cuts a pretty pathetic figure visually, too: geeky dress sense, feebly unassertive, his hair a mess. “I got a perm for that,” he says. “No one talks about the dedication of an actor any more. I lived with a perm for four or five months after I did that film!” But he wanted to have a “comedic silhouette”, he says. “So the perm made just my head bigger, like a big lollipop sort of thing.”

He’s a slightly more dashing middle-manager type in The Paper: the almost naively idealistic editor of a once great Ohio newspaper. The show is a gentle mockumentary sitcom in the mould of co-creator Greg Daniels’ other hits, Parks and Recreation and The Office, but it touches on a serious issue: the decline of local news (the paper in question is an afterthought to the company’s primary business – manufacturing toilet paper). It’s not overtly political, but “making something that is pro-journalism speaks for itself in terms of protecting it and caring about it”, says Gleeson, who considers himself “very much on the left”.

As always, Gleeson did his homework. Months before starting, he went and hung out with real journalists on some of Ohio’s surviving daily newspapers, shadowing them, attending editorial meetings, asking questions. It was eye-opening but also depressing. “By the time we were doing press for the first season, this person who I had shadowed a little bit, who was a very well-established journalist, was out of the job,” he says. She’d moved on because she could no longer make a living.

“It’s harder than it should be to do good journalism. People don’t want to pay for it, and people who it’s against don’t want it to exist. You can’t pretend that’s not happening, but the young people I met who were going into it, and those who were staying the course, fighting the good fight, I found overwhelmingly inspiring. So it gives me hope, though maybe not optimism.”

It’s a rare thing to interview an actor who sympathises with your profession, given how intrusive some of us can be: stalking their socials, ambushing their leisure time or even just asking questions about their lives, like I am now. But he knows the drill. “I’m trying to keep my personal life personal, just to talk about the work.”

Having a famous dad may have coloured Gleeson’s stance towards celebrity – even if he was essentially a grownup before Brendan became well known outside Ireland in the late 90s. “He is much more intensely famous,” says Gleeson of his father. Back home, Brendan can no longer walk down the street without being stopped.

His parents never encouraged or discouraged him, or his three younger brothers, from following in his father’s footsteps. “The only thing: they asked me not to be a standup comedian. Probably just because I wasn’t funny.” He’s not being entirely truthful here. His intention was to write and direct, but one day he agreed to accept an award on his father’s behalf. He was still at school at the time (a state secondary school just outside Dublin). “I was 16 and really shy, but weirdly it was like, ‘I could do

◀ *Gleeson in the Scottish comedy The Incomer*

▲ *Gleeson (left) with his brother Brian in Frank of Ireland*

'My parents asked me not to be a comedian. Probably because I wasn't funny'

◀ *Domhnall Gleeson ... 'My dad is much more intensely famous'*

that if he needs me to.'" This was going out live on Irish national television. "Right before I went up, they said, 'You've got 30 seconds for your acceptance speech,' and I had this three-page speech that my dad had written. I was like, 'I'm not gonna be able to say that in 30 seconds,' so I went up and sort of vamped, and made fun of it."

It turned out he *was* funny. "I liked the buzz of hearing people laugh," he admits. His father's agent, Teri Hayden, was watching, and called him in for a meeting. Three years later, in his first year at the Dublin Institute of Technology, he was cast in Martin McDonagh's IRA black comedy The Lieutenant of Inishmore. That's when he got hooked on acting: "I didn't have a thing of, 'I don't want to be an actor because of my dad.' It was by doing it I went, 'I *do* want to be an actor.' The play was in London, so there was distance from my dad. It wasn't like doing it in Dublin, feeling him looking over my shoulder." Four years later the play transferred to Broadway, where Gleeson received a Tony nomination. His career was up and running.

He's now worked with some of the biggest names in the business – the Coen brothers, Tom Cruise, Leonardo DiCaprio, Jennifer Lawrence, Julianne Moore, Margot Robbie, *Taylor Swift* – but Gleeson still gets awed by people. "When I met the Coen brothers I found it hard. I bumped into Paul Thomas Anderson at something once and I found that very difficult to keep my shit together." That was almost the case with Werner Herzog, but luckily, their first meeting was over Zoom, "which is so depersonalising and demythologising, just because it's all, 'Sorry, can you hear me?' There's nothing fancy about it. After that I felt prepared to meet him."

Gleeson only worked a few days on Bucking Fastard, but it was a memorable experience. Kate and Rooney Mara play twins who do everything together – speaking, living, dressing. They even fall for the same man. Gleeson plays their social worker. Unbelievably, it's based on a true story. Herzog met the real-life twins, Freda and Greta Chaplin (the title is a spoonerism they both made, in unison, in court). "I think maybe he was interested in making a documentary about them," says Gleeson. He began to suspect that although his character is Irish, he was based on Herzog himself. "He told me a couple of stories about meeting them and what it was like to be around them, then I realised my character in the film has some similar experiences. One of the scenes is basically something that happened to him, with them."

Herzog, of course, has one of the most famous and highly imitable accents in cinema. Was Gleeson tempted to try it? "When I realised my character has aspects of him in it, for a second in your mind you're like, 'Should I do it?' Then you're like, 'Absolutely not. No, no, no.'"

What's next for Gleeson? He doesn't know, he says, though he hopes The Paper will get another season. He's always got stuff in the pipeline, he's always in demand for all sorts of roles, genres, accents. Not having a "type" has proved to be a professional asset, and it keeps life interesting. "It's where I'm happiest," he says, "because you don't know what the next job is going to be, you don't know what the next challenge is going to be."

Before he goes, he apologises again for not answering some of the more personal questions I'd asked him, which really isn't necessary at all. Maybe it's the other side of the coin of his versatility. We don't have to know everything about people just because we see them on screen – and often it helps that we don't. *Season two of The Paper launches on Sky and Now on 10 September. The Incomer is in cinemas from Friday*

▼ *With Graham Norton and Taylor Swift on the set of her Opalite video*

◀ *In the US Office spin-off The Paper*

PHOTOGRAPHS: DAVID LEVENE/THE GUARDIAN. PHOTOGRAPHER'S ASSISTANT: FLORA LUNA. UNIVERSAL PICTURES/PAS; SPOTIFY; PEACOCK/SKY; MERMAN PRODUCTIONS

▲ 'Let's go have a lock-in at mine!' ... Joe Lycett

'OK fine. I'm a national treasure'

Joe Lycett's new Friday night TV show is filmed in a working pub, with his aunties behind the bar and celebrities doing trial shifts as managers. Or it will be, if only he can get his landlord's licence

Stuart Heritage

Joe Lycett sits in a pub, an untouched pint in front of him. "Since I had my son, I'm not drinking anywhere near as much," he laments. "Children do not respect hangovers, or tiredness in general."

His son is almost two, and Lycett has readjusted his life accordingly. "I've started going to bed when he does, which is about seven o'clock," he explains. "I've seen a few nights where I've just gone: 'Right, well, that's me, then.'"

However, this is all set to come to an end thanks to the comic's new television programme, Live from the Lycett Arms, which will not only be broadcast live three hours after his new bedtime, but absolutely surround him with alcohol. The Lycett Arms is a continuation of what began with his previous live Friday night show, Late Night Lycett, only with a more ambitious premise. This time, Lycett will host while simultaneously operating a working pub. It sounds as if it has been specifically constructed to maximise impromptu chaos – more on that in a bit – but for now Lycett has a pair of larger anxieties to deal with.

The first is that, even though we're meeting just a couple of weeks before the first episode, the pub isn't ready. "It's not fully constructed yet, so I've been to where it will be," he explains. "It's going to be in fashionable east London, and that's everything I can say about it, because I don't actually know the full address."

Nevertheless, he promises that the finished building will be "identifiably a pub. There'll be an outdoor area and a cellar. There's a bar. There's a kind of back room. There's a saloon bar. There's a pool table. There's darts. There's karaoke. It should be really fun. That's the goal. If it isn't fun, there's no point in doing it."

'I'm kind of amazed they commissioned this show – TV is in freefall'

A bigger issue, though, is that, since the Lycett Arms will be a real pub, Lycett will be its licensed operator. This is a role that comes with a legal requirement: he needs to pass a mandatory exam to be accredited with a Level 2 Award for Personal Licence Holders. It is an accreditation he does not yet hold.

"I took the exam but I failed," he says. "I didn't do any work, so that is a problem. I needed about 70% to pass, and I got something like 38%. I tried to use common sense, and I don't have a lot of it apparently."

Eager to help him out a little, I ask if he knows the four primary licensing objectives, as per section four of the Licensing Act 2003. The blood briefly drains from Lycett's face. "Safe ... safety ... safe drinking environment to create ... happy places, for people ... to dwell?" he yammers.

That isn't what's written on the test. The answer is: "Prevention of crime and disorder. Public safety. Protection of children from harm. Prevention of public nuisance."

"Yeah, that's what I said, isn't it?"

No, not really.

"Well, I think I paraphrased that. And I think that's their problem that I didn't get the licence because I did essentially paraphrase it right."

After strenuously assuring me that the show will go on, with a stand-in licensee if he continues to perform as disastrously as this, Lycett starts telling me how excited he is for people to see the show.

"So, it's my pub," he says. "But from week one, there will be a celebrity manager who's doing a trial shift. My aunties are going to be working the bar. There will be a weekly quiz and rotating regulars. I'm well up for weird and wonderful celebrities to just turn up, drink a pint and leave. I just want it to be constantly surprising and silly."

It's also exciting that he gets to be the face of live, late-night television, I tell him. It's a dying breed of show. "I'm kind of amazed they've commissioned it, because nobody's commissioning anything at the moment," he replies. "TV is in freefall – I don't know if you've heard."

So in essence, running a pub could be a fallback career if the TV work ever dries up? "I mean, hospitality is in freefall as well," he points out, not unreasonably. "Like most industries, it's all just sort of fucked, isn't it? Should I join the Guardian? Is that doing well?"

Still, the thought of turning the Lycett Arms into a permanent nightspot is something that appeals to him. After all, if Jeremy Clarkson has proved anything, it's that tourists love nothing more than a pub with a celebrity landlord.

"I think lots of people feel like they could open up a pub or restaurant or whatever, and obviously it's really hard," he says. "But I do like the idea of it. I think it's the cachet of being, like, 'Let's go and have a lock-in at mine.' When the reality must be doing invoices and working out VAT."

This is a big year for Lycett. As well as Live from the Lycett Arms, he is returning to standup after stepping aside for a couple of years. This is something he is palpably excited about. "I'm touring next year, but since last October I've been trying to do one gig a week," he says. "It took me a good few months to feel even close to like I knew what I was doing. I still don't feel like I know what I'm doing. But I'm really enjoying being on stage, and I'm not panicked about it in the way I was when I had just come back from paternity leave."

Since his last tour, Lycett has become more recognisable and beloved in a way that nudges him towards national treasure status.

"I dispute that," he growls.

Please agree for the sake of my question, I beg.

"Fine, OK, I'm a national treasure, yes," he says, rolling his eyes.

Because people pay more attention to him now than when he last toured, does he feel a greater weight of responsibility for the topics he covers? "No," he says. "If I started to change who I am on stage to fit what I think people want of me, I'd go mad. When you get reviewed, and the reviewer doesn't like what you do, there's this temptation to write the sort of show that the reviewer would like. But there are only about 10 comedy reviewers left in the whole country, and it wouldn't be good to write something just so that 10 white men will like me.

"I think the thing that has changed what I do most is being a father," he continues. "I feel more risk averse, but I also want to stand up for things more than I used to. It's like this weird tussle between not wanting to annoy the wrong people because I just want a calmer life, and also really wanting to annoy those people a lot more. But then a big part of this new show is also about swimming, so if you're into swimming-based material, you'll love it."

Lycett will take part in The Celebrity Traitors later this year, which will almost certainly be 2026's biggest show. He is sworn to such secrecy that he practically ties himself in a knot trying to give the blandest non-answers imaginable. "The production team were very nice, as was Claudia Winkleman. I can't say anything about the other players, so I can't say whether they're nice or not," he offers apologetically.

But before that airs, Lycett has six episodes of Live from the Lycett Arms to deliver. As I leave, he is taking notes on the decor of the pub we are in, particularly the quality of the bar itself. "Apparently it's been treated with Danish oil," he says approvingly. "That might be a future requirement for any pub I go into. The bar must have been treated with Danish oil."

Live from the Lycett Arms begins on Friday at 10pm on Channel 4

▼ *Tailor made … Lycett getting involved as a host of The Great British Sewing Bee*

PHOTOGRAPHS: ALICIA CANTER/THE GUARDIAN; MATT CROCKETT/CHANNEL 4/PA; MARK BOURDILLON/LOVE PRODUCTIONS

▶ *'We were fresh on the block and innocent' … Mike Leigh's feature debut Bleak Moments (1971)*
PHOTOGRAPH: ALAMY

'It wasn't just Hollywood crap'

How did an East End communist bring world cinema to the UK after being deported from the US? Mike Leigh and others reveal all

Andrew Pulver

Occasionally, vital pieces of the cultural jigsaw disappear without anyone really noticing. This, sadly, was the fate of Contemporary Films, the British film distributor that popularised sophisticated, grownup international cinema in the UK and heralded the arrival of the auteur generation with directors such as Ingmar Bergman, Satyajit Ray, Andrzej Wajda and Yasujiro Ozu.

Contemporary, and its founder Charles Cooper, weren't the only game in town – Kenneth Rive's Gala was a fellow traveller – but Contemporary got there first, setting up shop in 1951, first with short films for the then popular film society sector, and moving into features with the 1952 Japanese film Children of Hiroshima. Its marketplace clout faded in the 1990s, when it was a victim of changing industry practices. But amazingly the company is still with us – and has a 75th-anniversary series of screenings to showcase its history.

Along with screenings of films such as Miloš Forman's A Blonde in Love and Bergman's Wild Strawberries, the great and good are turning out in support, led by Mike Leigh, whose feature film debut, Bleak Moments, was picked up by Contemporary in 1971. "It was a great honour," Leigh says. "One was used to seeing 'Contemporary Films' on all the movies one saw that weren't just Hollywood crap."

Bleak Moments, a studiedly funny and weird film, is about a woman living an isolated life with a sister with a learning disability and a boring job. As a homegrown, off-kilter feature, it was a slightly unusual item for Contemporary to pick up. "We were fresh on the block and innocent," says Leigh, "and you take everything for granted in some way. But actually, when you think about it, they were pretty remarkable and they embraced this thing."

Now a Palme d'Or and Golden Lion winner, Leigh understands the impact the company had on his own development. But it is its effect on the wider culture, the cosmopolitanism that Contemporary helped foster, that is arguably its most important contribution. "I grew up in Manchester," says Leigh, "and I saw movies all the time, but I never saw one that wasn't in English. So when I came to London, world cinema suddenly presented itself. I have recollections of Russian films, Italian neorealism, you name it. It was all going on, and Contemporary was very much at the centre of that."

Cooper, the driving force behind it all, was an East End Jew – the son of a butcher from Ukraine – and a committed communist who saw cinema as a way to build awareness. Before the second world war, he brought Soviet films to the UK via Kino, the film section of the Workers' Theatre Movement, then spent the war in New York running a film section for the International Workers Order.

Deported from the US in 1950, he set about supplying films to film societies, of which there were an estimated 200 across Britain. The increasing interest in foreign "art" films meant Cooper was in tune with the intellectual times, with his special interest in eastern European and underclass-oriented films.

Part of his strength, it seems, was his devotion to family life and willingness to involve his children in his day-to-day. His twin daughters from his first marriage agree. Adi and Sue Cooper regale me with anecdotes about screenings in the basement of their Wembley home ("The room is crammed full of people! I'm two feet from the back wall gazing up at this film called Alexander Nevsky") to messing about in the school holidays at the company's Frith Street office ("pasting press cuttings into scrapbooks and getting seven and sixpence for three hours' work").

Also key to Contemporary's success was the relationship Cooper nurtured with George Hoellering, the Hungarian émigré who ran the Academy cinema on Oxford Street, which was the flagship venue for these kind of films. "They were joined at the hip," says Pete Lawley, Contemporary's current managing director. "They were the gold standard of the time."

Although Contemporary did acquire some of the key indies of the late 80s and early 90s, including Jane Campion's Sweetie and Hal Hartley's The Unbelievable Truth, the shift to home entertainment formats in the 90s passed Contemporary by. Instead it stuck to occasional re-releases of tried and tested classics from their archive.

Lawley says he is now working on plans for the future. "It's very important to me," he says. "I really want to keep it going. It can't be about the money, let's put it that way. It may be small but there's something worthwhile to build upon."

Contemporary 75 is at the BFI Southbank, London, from tomorrow to 11 October, beginning with a screening of Bleak Moments and Mike Leigh in conversation

REVIEW BY STUART HERITAGE

Raygun: Breaking Badly

◀ *'A unique brand of creative breaking' ... Rachael Gunn in Raygun: Breaking Badly*

The ridiculed Olympic breakdancer gets the last laugh

★★★★☆

Netflix

Netflix's Untold is ostensibly a series of sports documentaries. However, since its inception five years ago, it has been most successful when sport collides with the wider celebrity machine. There have been films about Caitlyn Jenner, Jake Paul and Vinnie Jones. The gold tends to come when the subjects spill over into public notoriety. With that in mind, it was only a matter of time before they made a film about Raygun.

You may remember Raygun as the Australian breakdancer who spent the biggest moment of her career at the Paris Olympics thrashing around like a toddler having a tantrum in a supermarket. If you didn't see her routine, you will almost certainly be aware of the memes she inspired. Adele discussed her during a concert. Rachel Dratch did an impersonation of her on Jimmy Fallon. For months, Raygun was everywhere. As this film demonstrates, she really didn't want to be.

This, of course, is part of the great Olympic tradition. In every competition, a country will put up an athlete who – while perhaps the best in their country – finds themselves wildly out of their league on the international stage. Raygun entered the same Olympic pantheon as Eddie the Eagle, Eric Moussambani and the Jamaican bobsleigh team; competitors whose limitations made them more famous than most champions.

However, there are a couple of key differences here. The first is that Raygun was competing in a sport that had never previously been held at the Olympics, and whose inclusion was already primed for ridicule. The second is that she was competing in the age of social media, allowing every idiot with a phone to mock her performance in real time. Crashing out of the Olympics with zero points was one thing. Knowing that the world considered you a joke turned out to be far worse.

Raygun – real name Dr Rachael Gunn, author of the PhD thesis Deterritorializing Gender in Sydney's Breakdancing Scene: A B-girl's Experience of B-boying – is understandably front and centre here, which is good because she turns out to be an intensely charismatic person, in turn open and joyful and infectious.

The same can be said for her husband, Sam, a breaker whose professional name (at least before he started training children) was Sammy Sex.

It is through their eyes that this textbook Olympic underdog story is told. A country holds trials for the Olympics. The best person on the day gets through, only to realise fairly quickly that the rest of the world is leagues ahead of them. Gunn watches in dismay as she realises that her unique brand of creative breaking doesn't mesh with the hardcore power moves of the world elite.

In effect, Australia entered an interpretive dancer into a gymnastics competition. Of course she was going to do badly. By her own admission, judged by these criteria, she was "pretty shit".

It's an opinion that, for a time, the world happened to share. A couple of Australian breakers named Tinylocks and Flix form a Greek chorus here, taking uncomfortably gleeful pleasure in Raygun's public downfall. But their opinions are amplified by reams of social media posts that gradually balloon out of all proportion, with some falsely claiming that Gunn qualified only because her husband was head of the Olympic committee, and others projecting no end of vitriol about her perceived privilege.

It was a truly ugly spectacle. Gunn began to take antidepressants and made a video begging the media to leave her alone. Needless to say, the video made the news, in one case above rolling text reporting the latest tally of dead Palestinians.

But once the outrage burned off, people started to notice what Gunn had done. Rather than try to keep up with her more conventionally talented competitors, she entered the Olympics on her own terms. Obviously that didn't work, because she left the group stage without a single point, but what we saw was a woman being her complete, undiluted self.

And isn't that more relatable than almost anything else at the Olympics? Most Olympians have pushed everything else aside for years, pinning the outcome of their lives on a single moment. Raygun, meanwhile, was a bundle of nerves – underprepared and brimming with impostor syndrome – who was simply trying to get through the day unscathed. In that respect, she may have been the most human athlete there.

What's On
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WHAT TO WATCH

Stolen Babies
9pm, BBC Two

Ann in Wales was sent away by her parents when she became pregnant after being raped ("I didn't blame them, I blamed myself"). Joan in Sunderland gave evidence in court against the teacher who raped and got her pregnant – but he was acquitted. They tell their stories in this blood-boiling documentary, along with other women who were unmarried, pregnant and sent to so-called "mother and baby homes" between 1949 and 1976. It brings their fight up to date as they demand an apology from the state. Remarkably, there are some joyful moments to hang on for. **Hollie Richardson**

Surviving Earth
8pm, Sky One

Two mating dinosaurs in Antarctica take the spotlight in this week's episode. How long before their time runs out and they feel the ripple effects of the seven-and-a-half-mile-long asteroid that has just landed in Mexico? Your enjoyment will very much depend on how much of the uncanny CGI you can stomach. **Priya Elan**

Bookish
8pm, U&Alibi

A suspicious death at a tailor's emporium is the latest two-part whodunnit for Mark Gatiss's tweedy postwar sleuth Gabriel Book. But why is the 75-year-old proprietor so keen to confess to murder? Meanwhile, Book's rascally apprentice Jack (Connor Finch) just happens to have acquired a snazzy new suit. **Graeme Virtue**

Professor T
9pm, ITV1

After school inspector Tyrone Walsh is found murdered following a spate of burglaries, Professor T and co explore the possible motives: was Walsh's "cultural bias against alternative education" a factor in his murder? Meanwhile, Miss Snares (Sarah Woodward) investigates whether or not Dean is Jasper's (Ben Miller) biological father. **Ali Catterall**

9/11: Days That Shocked the World
10pm, Channel 4

It is the 25th anniversary of one of this century's defining geopolitical events and this two-part documentary offers a straightforward but still striking commemoration of that terrible day. It hears from rescue workers, witnesses and survivors of the attack on New York but also explores the assault on the Pentagon and the fate of the fourth airliner, which crashed into a field in Pennsylvania. **Phil Harrison**

Reading Festival Highlights 2026
10.40pm, BBC One

Behold the edited highlights of a star-studded and presumably quite messy weekend of music in a field just outside Reading. This year, the festival sees performances from Chase & Status, Dave, Florence + the Machine, Raye and, both touting excellent new material, Fontaines DC and Charli xcx. **PH**

BBC One

6.0 Breakfast (T) **9.30** Morning Live (T) **10.45** Rip Off Britain (T) **11.30** Homes Under the Hammer (T) (R) **12.15** Bargain Hunt (T) (R) **1.0** News (T) **1.35** Regional News and Weather (T) **1.45** News (T) **2.0** Money for Nothing (T) **2.45** Escape to the Country (T) (R) **3.45** Garden Rescue (T) **4.30** The Answer Run (T) (R) **5.15** Pointless (T) **6.0** News (T) **6.30** Regional News and Weather (T) **7.0** The One Show (T) **7.30** EastEnders (T)

8.0 **The Repair Shop: Beyond the Barn** (T) New series. The experts revisit people who have been reunited with cherished mementos, starting with a cowboy hat with links to a rock star.
9.0 **Celebrity MasterChef** (T) The amateur cooks have to prepare the ultimate takeaway for Angry Ginge.

10.0 News (T)
10.30 Regional News (T) Weather
10.40 **Reading Festival Highlights 2026** (T) Music by Charli xcx, Florence + the Machine, Fontaines DC and Raye.
11.40 **The Hit List** (T) (R) Three pairs compete in the quiz to name as many hit songs and artists as possible.
12.25 Weather (T) **12.30** News (T)

BBC Two

6.30 Bargain Hunt (T) (R) **7.15** Money for Nothing (T) (R) **8.0** Sign Zone: Great Continental Railway Journeys (T) (R) **9.0** News (T) **11.15** Politics Live (T) **1.0** House of Games (T) (R) **1.30** The Edge (T) (R) **2.15** Weatherman Walking (T) (R) **2.45** Animal Park (T) (R) **3.30** Dogs in the Wild: Meet the Family (T) (R) **4.30** Vintage Antiques Roadshow (T) (R) **5.15** Flog It! (T) (R) **6.0** House of Games (T) (R) **6.30** Great British Railway Journeys (T) (R) **7.0** Celebrity Antiques Road Trip (T) (R)

8.0 **Inside the Factory** (T) (R) Paddy McGuinness explores the surprising process of turning potato starch into 500m packs of Quavers cheese curls every year.
9.0 **Stolen Babies** (T) The story of forced adoption and its lasting effects, a practice sanctioned by the UK state from 1949 until 1976.

10.30 Newsnight (T) Weather
11.05 **Couples Therapy** (T) Shay confronts Clinton's online infidelities.
11.30 **Couples Therapy** (T) Nessa and Drea work to break a familiar cycle.
12.05 A House Through Time (T) (R) **1.05** Sign Zone: Celebrity MasterChef (T) (R) **2.05** The Mother of All Cons (T) (R)

ITV1

6.0 Good Morning Britain (T) **10.0** This Morning (T) **1.30** News and Weather (T) **1.55** Local News and Weather (T) **2.0** Dickinson's Real Deal (T) (R) **3.0** Deal Or No Deal (T) (R) **4.0** Tipping Point (T) (R) **5.0** The Chase (T) (R) **6.0** Local News and Weather (T) **6.30** News and Weather (T) **7.30** Millionaire Hot Seat (T)

8.0 **Emmerdale** (T) An arrival shocks the villagers, and Vinny tells Kev his plan.
8.30 **Coronation Street** (T) Idris confronts Ronnie for stealing his car.
9.0 **Professor T** (T) A school inspector is murdered in his home, and a number of items are stolen, which links the case to a spate of burglaries.

10.0 News (T) Weather
10.30 Local News (T) Weather
10.45 **WhatsApp Obsession: The Murder of Stephanie Hansen** (T) (R) Documentary.
11.40 British Touring Car Championship Highlights (R)
12.55 Shop on TV **3.0** Force of Nature (T) (R) **3.55** Breaking Dad (T) (R) **4.15** Unwind With ITV (T) **5.35** Pictionary (T) (R)

Channel 4

6.30 The King of Queens (T) (R) **7.45** Everybody Loves Raymond (T) (R) **9.10** Frasier (T) (R) **11.10** Ramsay's 24 Hours to Hell and Back (T) (R) **12.05** News (T) **12.10** Find It, Fix It, Flog It (T) (R) **1.10** The Great House Giveaway (T) (R) **2.10** Countdown (T) **3.0** A Place in the Sun (T) (R) **4.0** The Great B&B Challenge (T) (R) **5.0** Chateau DIY (T) (R) **6.0** A New Life in the Sun: Where Are They Now? (T) **7.0** News (T)

8.0 **Kirstie and Phil's Love It Or List It: Brilliant Builds** (T) A look back at seemingly unresolvable property problems in Hamilton and Milton Keynes.
9.0 **The Jury: 14 and on Trial for Murder** (T) Fourteen-year-old defendant Daniel describes growing up in an abusive household.

10.0 **9/11: Days That Shocked the World** (T) Rescuers and survivors describe the events.
12.0 Emergency Helicopter Medics (T) (R) **1.0** Kitchen Nightmares USA (T) (R) **1.50** FILM Minari (Lee Isaac Chung, 2020) **3.50** Sunday Brunch (T) (R) **4.05** Jamie: Eat Yourself Healthy (T) (R) **5.0** Come Dine With Me (T) (R)

Channel 5

6.0 Milkshake! **9.05** Entertainment News (T) **9.15** Jeremy Vine (T) **11.30** Storm & Alexis (T) **12.30** Live Snooker: British Open 2026 (T) **5.30** News (T) **6.25** Car Pound Cops (T) (R) **7.0** Cycling: Vuelta a España 2026 (T)

8.0 **Call the Bailiffs: Time to Pay Up** (T) Agents Mark and Sam pursue a company ordered to repay money unlawfully deducted from a former employee's wages.
9.0 **The Game** (T) Patrick intensifies his psychological assault on Huw and Margot when Jackie breaks into Margot's flat.

10.0 A&E: Crash Scene Emergency (T) (R)
11.0 Ambulance: Code Red (T) (R)
12.0 A&E After Dark (T) (R) **12.55** Car Pound Cops (T) (R) **1.30** Cruise TV (T) (R) **2.30** GPs: Behind Closed Doors (T) (R) **3.20** The Highland Vet (T) (R) **4.15** Yorkshire With Jane McDonald (T) (R) **5.15** Ben and Holly (T) (R)

BBC Four

7.0 **Fred Dibnah's Building of Britain** (T) (R) Norman engineering techniques. **7.30** **Villages By the Sea** (T) (R) Seaton Sluice in Northumberland.

8.0 **Rome: A History of the Eternal City** (T) (R) Rome's rise from the neglect of the 14th century into the seat of the papacy. Last in the series.
9.0 **Rome's Invisible City** (T) (R) Alexander Armstrong explores the underground treasures that made Rome the powerhouse of the ancient world.

10.0 **I, Claudius** (T) (R) Messalina begins a rebellion.
10.50 **I, Claudius** (T) (R) The emperor is urged to remarry.
11.45 The Australian Wars (T) (R)
12.45 Rome's Invisible City (T) (R) **1.45** Fred Dibnah's Building of Britain (T) (R) **2.15** Villages By the Sea (T) (R) **2.45** Rome: A History of the Eternal City (T) (R)

Other channels

BBC Three

7.0pm The Catch Up **7.05** Deadly 60 **7.30** Deadly 60 **8.0** Top Gear **9.0** Top Gear **10.0** Guy Montgomery's Guy Mont-Spelling Bee Australia **11.35** RuPaul's Drag Race UK: Meet the Queens **12.0** The Young Offenders **12.30** The Young Offenders **1.0** The Young Offenders **1.35** The Young Offenders **2.05** The Young Offenders **2.35** The Young Offenders **3.05** Zoners **3.20** Scamanda

U&Dave

6.0am Teleshopping **7.25** Top Gear **8.20** Border Force: America's Gatekeepers **9.20** Border Force: America's Gatekeepers **10.20** Rick Stein's Road to Mexico **11.20** Yukon Gold **12.20** Top Gear **1.20** Top Gear **2.20** Mortimer & Whitehouse: Gone Fishing **3.0** Speed With Guy Martin **4.0** Hairy Bikers' Best of British **5.0** Rick Stein's Road to Mexico **6.0** Rick Stein's Road to Mexico **7.0** Mortimer & Whitehouse: Gone Fishing **7.40** Would I Lie to You? **8.20** Would I Lie to You? **9.0** QI XL **10.0** Have I Got a Bit More News for You **11.0** Taskmaster **12.0** Mock the Week **12.40** Would I Lie to You? **1.20** Would I Lie to You? **2.0** QI XL **3.0** Richard Osman's House of Games **3.30** Parks and Recreation **4.0** Teleshopping

E4

6.0am Hollyoaks **6.55** Rude(ish) Tube Shorts **7.0** Couples Come Dine With Me **8.0** Ramsay's Kitchen Nightmares USA **10.0** America's Funniest Home Videos **12.0** The Simpsons **2.0** The Goldbergs **3.0** Modern Family **5.0** The Simpsons **7.0** Hollyoaks **7.30** Brooklyn Nine-Nine **8.0** Ladies of London: The New Reign **9.0** Ramsay's Kitchen Nightmares USA **10.0** Gogglebox **11.0** First Dates Valentine's **12.05** Naked Attraction **1.10** Gogglebox **2.10** Ladies of London: The New Reign **3.0** Ramsay's Kitchen Nightmares USA **3.55** The Simpsons **4.20** The Goldbergs **5.10** Brooklyn Nine-Nine **5.35** Modern Family

Film4

11.0am FILM The Personal History of David Copperfield (2019) **1.25** FILM Rosaline (2022) **3.15** FILM The Story of Robin Hood and His Merrie Men (1952) **5.0** FILM The Gunfighter (1950) **6.45** FILM Uncharted (2022) **9.0** FILM Venom: Let There Be Carnage (2021) **10.50** FILM Daredevil (2003) **12.55** FILM The Missionary (1982)

PBS America

6.0am Teleshopping **8.0** Weathered: Earth's Extremes **8.50** Secrets of the Royal Palaces **9.45** Ancient Apocalypse **10.55** France: The Post War Recovery **12.0** Cleopatra **1.0** Secrets of the Royal Palaces **2.10** Ancient Apocalypse **3.15** France: The Post War Recovery **4.25** Cleopatra **5.25** Secrets of the Royal Palaces **6.25** Ancient Apocalypse **7.35** France: The Post War Recovery **8.40** Cleopatra **9.40** Secrets of the Royal Palaces **10.40** Ancient Apocalypse **12.0** France: The Post War Recovery **1.10** Weathered: Earth's Extremes **2.0** Teleshopping

Sky One

6.0am Mornings With Ridge and Frost **8.0** Stargate SG-1 **10.0** La Brea **11.0** The Simpsons **12.0** Africa's Hunters **1.0** Hawaii Five-0 **3.0** S.W.A.T **5.0** The Simpsons **6.0** Superstore **7.0** The Simpsons **8.0** Surviving Earth **9.0** FILM The Expendables 2 (2012) **11.0** Rob & Romesh vs Hollywood Stunts **12.0** Grimm **1.0** Evil **2.0** The Force: North East **3.0** Hawaii Five-0 **4.0** S.W.A.T **5.0** S.W.A.T

Sky Arts

6.0am Mozart's Women: A Musical Journey **7.30** The Joy of Painting **8.0** Artist of the Year: Masterclass **8.30** Artist of the Year: Masterclass **9.0** Tales of the Unexpected **9.30** Tales of the Unexpected **10.0** Alfred Hitchcock Presents **10.30** Alfred Hitchcock Presents **11.0** Discovering: Anthony Hopkins **12.0** The Who Sell Out: Classic Albums **1.0** Tales of the Unexpected **1.30** Tales of the Unexpected **2.0** The Alfred Hitchcock Hour **3.0** Stories from the National Portrait Gallery **4.0** Discovering: Faye Dunaway **5.0** Portrait Artist of the Year 2024 **6.0** Tales of the Unexpected **6.30** Tales of the Unexpected **7.0** Alfred Hitchcock Presents **7.30** Alfred Hitchcock Presents **8.0** Michael Flatley: Lord of the Dance - Dangerous Games **9.50** The Nineties **10.50** Art's Wildest Movement: Mannerism **11.50** Mary Cassatt: Painting the Modern Woman **1.0** Klimt and the Kiss **2.15** Inside Art: Barbara Hepworth **2.45** Art Traffickers: Treasures Stolen from the Tombs **3.45** National Trust: National Treasures **5.0** Stories from the National Portrait Gallery

Sky Atlantic

6.0am Fish Town **8.0** Billions **10.15** The Last of Us **12.30** Homicide: Life on the Street **1.25** Homicide: Life on the Street **2.20** Billions **3.25** Billions **4.30** The White Lotus **5.35** The White Lotus **6.45** The Last of Us **7.50** The Last of Us **9.0** The Terror: Devil in Silver **10.0** The Terror: Devil in Silver **11.0** Task **12.10** The Five-Star Weekend **1.05** The Five-Star Weekend **2.0** Fightland **3.05** Gomorrah: The Origins **4.10** The Guest Wing

▲ *Rosaline, Film4*

Radio

Radio 3

6.30am Breakfast **9.30** Essential Classics **1.0** Classical Live. From the Proms, Yannick Nézet-Séguin conducts the Met Orchestra in Mahler's Symphony No 4 in G major. Plus, from the International Baroque Festival, Beaune, D Scarlatti's Salve Regina, with Le Concert d'Astrée conducted by Emmanuelle Haïm. **3.0** Choral Evensong **4.0** Composer of the Week: Élisabeth Jacquet De La Guerre (R) **5.0** In Tune **6.30** BBC Proms 2026. Live from the Royal Albert Hall, Kirill Petrenko conducts the Berlin Philharmonic in London. Elgar's "Enigma" Variations and Tchaikovsky's Symphony No 4 in F minor. **8.30** New Generation Artists. The Novo Quartet play Smetana's From My Life and pianist Lukas Sternath performs Liszt's Funérailles. **10.15** BBC Proms 2026. The Gesualdo Six and Colin Currie Group perform choral music by De Machaut, Pérotin, Ockeghem, Von Bingen, Dunstable, Owain Park and Des Prez, ending with Reich's Tehillim. **11.45** 'Round Midnight **12.30** Through the Night

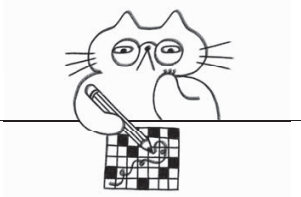
Radio 4

6.0am Today **9.0** **Sideways**. Matthew Syed explores what it means to pursue knowledge. (8/8) **9.30** Breakin' the Cycle: The Final Act. Lewis Albrow reveals how D was arrested and imprisoned. (6/6) **10.0** Woman's Hour **11.0** Medical Emergency (R) **11.40** This Week in History **11.45** You Do Not Have to Say Anything (R) **12.0** News **12.04** You and Yours **12.57** Weather **1.0** The World at One **1.45** A 9/11 Story. FBI special agent Danny Gonzalez chases leads in San Diego. (3/10) **2.0** The Archers (R) **2.15** Broken Colours. Thriller, by Matthew Broughton. Jess's new boyfriend Dan has vanished into thin air. With Holli Dempsey and Josef Altin. (2/5) (R) **3.0** Money Box (1/8) **3.30** Glasgow: Satellite City. Shiona McCallum reports on how the city has transformed itself into Europe's largest producer of small satellites. **4.0** NatureBang (R) **4.15** The Media Show **5.0** PM **5.57** Weather **6.0** News **6.30** Best Medicine. The guests talk about team sports, the senses, dog blood donors and board games. Kiri Pritchard-McLean hosts. (6/6) **7.0** The Archers **7.15** Front Row (R) **8.0** The Moral Maze (3/6) **9.0** Invisible Hands (R) **9.30** Michael Sheen Gets Into Character (R) **9.59** Weather **10.0** The World Tonight **10.45** **Book at Bedtime**: A Working Mother. By Agnes Owens. (3/5) **11.0** Nora Meadows' Week of Wellness (R) **11.15** **The Skewer**. Topical comedy show from Jon Holmes. (1/5) **11.30** Today in Parliament **12.0** News and Weather **12.30** You Do Not Have to Say Anything (R) **12.48** Shipping Forecast **1.0** As World Service **5.0** News **5.04** Yesterday in Parliament **5.32** Weather **5.34** Shipping Forecast **5.43** Prayer for the Day **5.45** Farming Today

Radio 4 Extra

6.0am Five Red Herrings (8/8) **6.30** Kill the Pharaoh! (8/8) **7.0** Men of Intelligence (2/6) **7.30** The Missing Hancocks (1/5) **8.0** You Heard It Here First (3/6) **8.30** Flush (3/5) **8.45** The Offing (4/10) **9.0** Best Medicine (5/6) **9.30** The Secret History of a School (3/10) **9.45** Daily Service **10.0** Mercury **11.0** Five Red Herrings (8/8) **11.30** Kill the Pharaoh! (8/8) **12.0** Men of Intelligence (2/6) **12.30** The Missing Hancocks (1/5) **1.0** You Heard It Here First (3/6) **1.30** Flush (3/5) **1.45** The Offing (4/10) **2.0** The Ultimate Choice (5/6) **2.30** Getting Nowhere Fast (5/6) **3.0** Conversation from the Engine Room **4.0** Mercury **5.0** Five Red Herrings (8/8) **5.30** Kill the Pharaoh! (8/8) **6.0** Men of Intelligence (2/6) **6.30** The Missing Hancocks (1/5) **7.0** You Heard It Here First (3/6) **7.30** Flush (3/5) **7.45** The Offing (4/10) **8.0** The Ultimate Choice (5/6) **8.30** Getting Nowhere Fast (5/6) **9.0** Conversation from the Engine Room **10.0** Comedy Club: Best Medicine (5/6) **10.30** Delve Special (2/4) **11.0** Welcome to Wherever You Are (4/4) **11.30** Lucy Porter's Lucky Dip **12.0** Mercury **1.0** Five Red Herrings (8/8) **1.30** Kill the Pharaoh! (8/8) **2.0** Men of Intelligence (2/6) **2.30** The Missing Hancocks (1/5) **3.0** You Heard It Here First (3/6) **3.30** Flush (3/5) **3.45** The Offing (4/10) **4.0** The Ultimate Choice (5/6) **4.30** Getting Nowhere Fast (5/6) **5.0** Conversation from the Engine Room

Puzzles



Yesterday's solutions

Wordsearch

T	D	G	S	Q	S	S	I	H
E	S	R	B	L	A	C	K	A
E	B	A	C	D	L	M	N	R
F	O	C	A	Y	U	I	E	S
D	C	E	R	T	G	T	U	W
E	N	F	E	O	E	N	H	Q
B	E	U	O	P	Y	I	E	I
B	C	L	M	N	T	A	A	T
E	K	U	L	E	E	J	L	J
W	R	W	H	O	O	P	E	R
T	N	G	N	I	R	I	A	P

Solution no 17,573

T	H	R	U	S	H		Y	A	N	K	E	D
H		A		L			B		N		E	
U	M	B	R	A		A	X	O	L	O	T	L
M		B		N		M		L		C		U
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S		T				E		S		O		E
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E		A		A		S				E		B
S	C	R	U	B		A	L	O	O	F	L	Y
T		R		E		N		D		F		H
A	V	E	R	R	E	D		O	P	E	R	A
T		N		G				U		C		N
E	A	S	I	E	R		G	R	A	T	E	D

Sudoku no 7,437

5	8	9	4	2	6	3	1	7
7	6	2	3	1	8	9	4	5
3	4	1	5	7	9	2	8	6
2	3	7	1	8	4	6	5	9
4	9	6	2	3	5	1	7	8
1	5	8	9	6	7	4	3	2
8	7	3	6	4	2	5	9	1
6	1	5	8	9	3	7	2	4
9	2	4	7	5	1	8	6	3

Word wheel

DIALECTAL

Suguru

5	1	2	3	2	1
4	3	4	1	4	3
2	1	2	3	2	1
3	4	5	1	4	3
2	1	3	2	5	1
4	5	4	1	3	2

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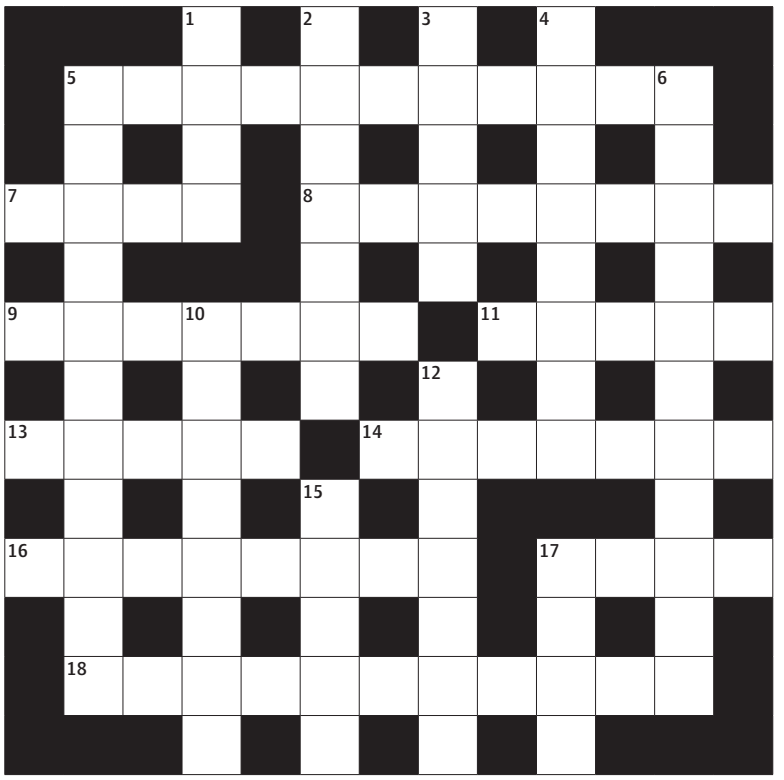
Quick crossword no 17,574

Across

5 One dampening the mood at social occasion (5-6)
7 Orderly (4)
8 Female personification of (usually good) fortune (4,4)
9 Nonplussed (2,1,4)
11 Venom (5)
13 Flavourless (5)
14 Became gradually narrower (7)
16 Tooth or valve - Cupid sib (anag) (8)
17 Helen of __ (4)
18 Aladdin's mode of transport (5,6)

Down

1 Unravel the end of - brawl (4)
2 Tour de France competitor (7)
3 Irritable, with shifting emotional states (5)
4 Dessert - in __ order (5-3)
5 Dotty art form (11)
6 Make things difficult (4,3,4)
10 Human speech (8)
12 Accessory associated with Margaret Thatcher (7)
15 Smoked ham - small spot (5)
17 Worm, measure or deck (4)



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Sudoku no 7,438

Medium. Fill the grid so that each row, column and 3x3 box contains the numbers 1-9. Printable version at theguardian.com/sudoku

	4	1	2				9	
		9			5		3	
2							5	8
	6		1	7	8		3	
	1		6	9	4		8	
8	2							3
		4		2		8		
	9				5	1	2	

Suguru

Fill the grid so that each square in an outlined block contains a digit. A block of two squares contains the digits 1 and 2, a block of three squares contains the digits 1, 2 and 3, and so on. No same digit appears in neighbouring squares, not even diagonally.

2					2
3	2				
			4		3

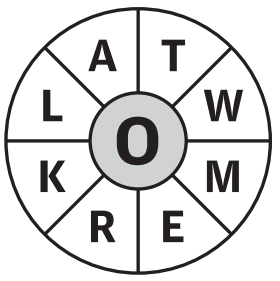
Wordsearch

Can you find 15 terms associated with the heart in the grid? Words can run forwards, backwards, vertically or diagonally, but always in a straight, unbroken line.

A	U	R	I	C	L	E	E	P
A	B	L	O	O	D	E	L	U
V	O	G	P	R	L	Y	O	L
D	E	R	I	O	N	R	T	S
C	H	N	T	N	G	E	S	E
I	H	S	T	A	G	T	A	M
N	Y	E	N	R	O	R	I	U
S	T	P	S	Y	I	A	D	S
M	U	I	R	T	A	C	D	C
R	E	B	M	A	H	C	L	L
V	E	N	A	C	A	V	A	E

Word wheel

Find as many words as possible using the letters in the wheel. Each must use the central letter and at least three others. Letters may be used only once. You may not use plurals, foreign words or proper nouns. There is at least one nine-letter word to be found. Target: 26. Good: 33. Very good: 40. Excellent: 46



Trivia corner

Who created the character Bozo the Clown?
a. Joseph Grimaldi
b. Alan W Livingston
c. Lulu Adams
d. Albert Alter
Answer top right

TODAY'S TRIVIA CORNER ANSWER **ALAN W LIVINGSTON**